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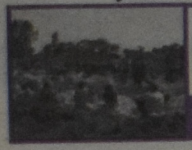

A volunteer's snapshots of Uganda...p. 7

When TV gets the morality right ...p.12

60th year of publication

Deck the halls with election posters falalalala

Harry der Nederlanden

When the holidays arrived and the election campaigning was put on hold, according to the polls the Liberals and Conservatives were in a dead heat. The newspapers, seemingly desperate for an election story the day after boxing day, headlined a nasty blog (a personal website for public consumption) about Layton and his wife by a Liberal party official. A diligent blog search would no doubt uncover similar nasty comments made by those of other parties, but this was by a Liberal party official. The pundits had predicted this would be an unusually nasty campaign well before it started, and they've been working hard to prove that they were right. But from what I've seen, this campaign actually looks cleaner than usual.

However, perhaps the Liberals haven't unlimbered all their guns yet. Early in the campaign it looked as if Martin was sitting back allowing Harper to have the stage. Perhaps he wanted to see what the conservatives had up their sleeve, or perhaps they figured that over the holidays the voters would forget what had transpired before anyway so they were saving their heavy artillery till after New Years.

Harper hasn't been attacking the Liberals on the sponsorship scandal, perhaps because, as a Canadian Press article put it, everyone is suffering from "scandal fatigue," not just in Canada, but in Britain, France, Italy and the US as well. Too many scandals seem to blunt the public's sense of outrage. People are becoming convinced that "everyone is doing it." In fact, not only the politicians are fast losing respect, even the bearers of bad news, the press, is losing credibility in the process.

So playing the scandal card may not be good strategy – except, perhaps, in Quebec. Quebecers are still ticked off at the Liberals about the sponsorship scandal and don't seem disposed to be kind to them come election day.

Harper did take a stab at linking the Liberals to organized crime. That was not nice. But according to the polls young voters are becoming so cynical they suspect that all politics is a form of organized crime.

As we go into the last three weeks of the campaign, it may be helpful to rehash some of the highlights (not necessarily high points) of the election campaign. Some of it many of us will have forgotten by now, since little of it was highly memorable.

After the Gomery Report came out November 1, you may remember, the Liberals suffered a steep drop in support. But the public has a short memory, and less than two weeks later they were back as strong as before.

As the opposition parties contemplated the possibility of an election campaign over the holidays, there were predictions that this would be so offensive to the voters that they'd punish those responsible for causing it. However, just before Christmas there seemed little lingering resentment among voters on that score.

One advantage of a Christmas campaign is that cartoonists

*See **Election** on page 2...*

Iraqi vote points to Islamist path

Early returns reveal that Shiites and Sunnis opted for religious parties

Ilene R. Prusher

BAGHDAD – Stretching new-found democratic muscle upon their first chance to elect a full-term government, Iraqis overwhelmingly threw their support behind religious parties defined along sectarian lines and ethnicity.

A bloc of Shiite religious parties close to Iran has, according to results released Tuesday, attracted the largest percentage of voters.

Here in the capital, a national barometer because it is the most diverse of Iraq's 18 provinces, the United Iraq Alliance – religious Shiites who dominated the interim government formed in May – won about 58 percent of the vote.

A Sunni Islamist alliance comprised of politicians who have defended the insurgency campaign against US troops came in next, with close to 19 percent.

Trailing in third is Iyad Allawi, a secular Shiite who was favored by the US and Iraqi moderates hoping to rise above the country's rising sectarianism. Mr. Allawi, billed as a man who could unite parties and crack down on terrorism, received less than 14 percent of the vote.

Results are still preliminary and a final count may not be announced until January. But what clearly emerges is the tendency of millions of Iraqis to turn to religious and sectarian leaders to represent their interests in the post-Saddam political arena.

With more than three-quarters of the country giving a vote of confidence to Islamist parties, last Thursday's vote raises the prospect of Iraq being more overtly religious than ever before.

The ideological orientation of the two leading vote-getters means Washington may have to work with a government of leaders who have resented the US presence here and demanded some kind of timetable for a troop withdrawal.

Clouding the election process are more than 1,000 complaints of irregularities, 20 of them considered serious enough to be deemed "red-card" violations. "The results won't be announced

*See **Iraq** on page 2...*

Iraqis waiting to vote

News

Elections ... *continued from page 1*

A cartoonist's view of the elections

IN 2006, I SEE CANADA VOTING IN ANOTHER ANEMIC LIBERAL MINORITY GOVERNMENT. THE NDP WILL CRAWL BACK INTO BED WITH THEM ONCE AGAIN AND THERE WILL BE MORE LIBERAL SCANDALS...
SHES GOOD

could exploit the parallel between politicians with big campaign promises and Santa Claus, and there were few who could resist the opportunity of putting Joe Voter on Santa's lap.

Well before the no-confidence vote, Martin seemed to be in the election mode, promising billions in tax cuts and billions more in spending. The opposition parties, of course, charged that the Liberals were attempting to buy voters with their own money – something they, of course, would never do. Don Martin of *The National Post* spoke of "a raging blizzard of spending announcements" that was approaching $20 billion. There were few segments of society that weren't promised benefits: lumber companies on the west coast, fisheries on the east coast, big corporations in between, support for grain farmers and natives, a better deal for the cities, child care, health care and the military.

Martin sought to revise his Mr. Dithers image by taking on President Bush and the US. America bashing seemed to have worked in Germany; why not here? The US ambassador to Canada got in on the act, which may not have been wise. Although Canadians do enjoy a bit of America-bashing themselves, however, they get a bit uneasy when the government does it. After all, they are well aware that they owe their continuing prosperity to trade with the US.

Bashing the US on Kyoto turned out to be a bad idea, since it turns out that, although it has signed the accord, Canada has done worse in controlling greenhouse gas emissions than the US.

On the day of the no-confidence vote (Nov. 28), bettors were not putting their money on Harper. Minority governments almost always have been re-elected with a majority in the past. Besides, said the pundits, who would want a minority Conservative government. Lacking NDP support, it would be even less capable of governing than a Liberal minority.

Journalists predicted that the big theme of this election would be the need for a change. But the Liberals were no less aware of this than the Conservatives and NDP, so Martin, too, began campaigning on the theme of change. Who is the party of change? Why, the Liberals of course – even though they have been in power so long Canada is getting the reputation of being a one-party democracy.

Taking the initiative, Harper launched his campaign by declaring himself in favor of traditional marriage and promising to have a free vote in parliament on the issue. But he later pledged not to use the notwithstanding clause to get around the Charter and the courts. Critics were quick to point out that this means that same-sex marriage will stand, for the only way to undo it is to employ that clause.

Harper, it seems, wanted to get the issue out of the way as early as possible, but as the television debate demonstrated, his opponents aren't likely to miss an opportunity to try to paint Harper as scary in the area of human rights. In fact, during the debate Martin said that someone who doesn't support the Charter shouldn't be allowed to run for Prime Minister of Canada. That was pretty nasty.

The NDP surged for a while as Layton positioned himself as the voice of reason between the bickering, partisan Liberals and Conservatives. But the Liberals began appealing to the voters on the left by suggesting that splitting votes on the left will only help the Conservatives into power. Some NDP supporters also questioned Layton's wisdom in supporting a no-confidence vote, since in a Liberal minority government he was, as a story in *Maclean's* suggested, the real power behind the throne. Martin needed him.

After outing himself on same-sex marriage, Harper took the lead in the campaign by promising a guarantee on wait times for healthcare and pledging to cut the GST by two percent over five years. He was a bit vague on how the guarantee would work, seeing as there's an actual doctor shortage in Canada. The Liberals countered the GST reduction with a cut in income taxes, arguing that a GST cut would benefit the rich

Iraq *...continued from p.1*

until those red complaints are resolved," said US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad.

Several Iraqi observers say they were deeply concerned over whether voters will see the results as legitimate, and raised the possibility of increased strife if claims of vote-rigging and the use of force at the polls are not answered.

Both Allawi and the Sunni alliance have made charges of voter fraud, and suggested that the Iraqi election commission was stacked with Shiite sympathizers.

"What will happen if even five of these red complaints don't get resolved?" Asks Ismail Zayer, the editor of the *Sabah el-Jadida* (New Morning) newspaper. "We will have a national crisis on our hands because I don't think the Sunni coalition will accept that," he adds. "I think a lot of the moderates were putting their hopes in Allawi because he was the one who was going to be able to bridge the gap as a secular person who didn't want to focus on sectarian interests."

Iraq's sectarian shift

Since its creation as a nation-state by British and other power brokers in the post-World War I Middle East, Iraq has been tenuously held together by emphasizing national identity over religious and sectarian ties. Sunni Arabs, however, were entrusted with the country's leadership. And although Saddam Hussein's Baath Party was set up to be a supposedly secular nationalist party with roots in socialism, the former dictator increasingly relied on Sunni tribal ties to maintain his power base.

Today's shift toward Islamic parties, says Thabit A. J. Abdullah, a history professor at York University in Toronto, has grown in part as a backlash against that period, as well as a reaction to the postwar turmoil since Mr. Hussein's overthrow by US forces in April 2003.

Professor Abdullah, a native of Baghdad, recently returned to find sectarian divisions palpable at a level that didn't exist 25 or 30 years ago.

He points to the US decision to dissolve the Iraqi Army after the invasion and the ensuing social disorder as an example of why many Iraqis have turned to religious leaders: They have been one of the few constant comforts in a sea of upheaval.

"Whatever kind of a national fabric – the Army, the police – was done away with, there was nothing to fill that vacuum. Nothing replaced it. So, people will look to those leaders who stood by them through their decades of need – at the mosque," he says.

Abdullah says it was unrealistic for the US to assume that Hussein would be replaced with a government that would put a premium on Western ideals, or that a critical mass of Iraqis would choose an overtly pro-US leader who promised to stay out of the sectarian fray.

"Anyone who expected secular democracy and liberal, Western values to suddenly become ingrained in the Iraqi psyche is totally deluding himself," he says.

Shiite power play

The Shiite coalition that is likely to determine the configuration of Iraq's next government is made up of several parties that don't necessarily agree with one another's outlook, for example, on the role of the clergy in politics.

That ticket, known as 555, did extraordinarily well in the south – winning over 77 percent of the vote in Basra. But newspapers in Baghdad have carried stories of voter manipulation in those areas, telling of instances in which voters were met at the polling stations by officials asking them to put a hand over the Koran and swear to vote for the Shiite religious ticket.

Kurdish parties, meanwhile, garnered an overwhelming majority in northern Iraq.

Mr. Khalilzad, giving a year-end press conference, acknowledged that most Iraqis preferred to cast votes along sectarian and ethnic lines. "But for Iraq to succeed," he warned, "there has to be a cross-sectarian cooperation." Too heavy of a focus on sectarian ties, he said, "undercuts prospects for success."

With growing protests and the threat of a Sunni walkout looming, the hard work of coalition building has hardly begun.

But many here are trying to work out the permutations. While the Shiite religious politicians seem most likely to turn first to their recent allies in the Kurdish parties, there is also speculation that Iraq could see the emergence of an Islamic coalition that would unite Sunnis and Shiites.

Another scenario includes the possibility of disgruntled Sunni Arabs and Kurds allying themselves with Allawi to form a multiparty coalition to prevent Shiites from assuming power.

And as the election results roll in, still other options exist.

The wider the Shiite victory, the less they will need coalition partners to control the 275-seat parliament for the next four years.

Politics

more than the poor. (It all depends on how you calculate – whether in absolute terms or as a percentage of income.)

The targeting of GST by the Conservatives was strategically clever, for it reminds the voters of the Liberal failure to live up to their past promise to repeal the tax.

The opposition parties branded Harper's move as no less vote-buying than the Liberals, and the NDP complained that the loss of revenue would hamper the government's ability to lower tuition fees in the universities and tackle pollution.

In early December commentators declared that the central issue of the election is healthcare. But every candidate seems prepared to offer the moon in that department. Harper promised – repeatedly – that there would be no two-tier healthcare system. And Layton conceded that under certain conditions he would not oppose certain kinds of private care. Generally, the opposition parties agreed that if you feel sick and the doctor isn't there to help you, it's undoubtedly Martin's fault.

Harper tried to make crime and the criminal justice system an issue. It had not been getting much traction, but after the multiple shooting on Boxing Day in Toronto, that may change.

Harper stole some thunder from the Liberals by promising a $1,200 tax cut for every preschool child to be used by parents to pay for whatever kind of daycare they wished. One day later, Martin responded by pledging that his government would almost double federal spending on child care to $11 billion.

Since the additional funds would be spread over an additional five years, however, it drew a lot of snide jokes. Some suggested the Conservatives might outbid the Liberals by extending the spending another 10 years.

The jokes became a little more pointed when a Liberal party hack complained that if the money were left in the hands of parents, they'd only spend it on "beer and popcorn." The Conservatives, of course, jumped at the chance to brand the Liberals as the party that believes it can do a better job of raising children than parents themselves. It quickly had a lot of beer-and-popcorn signs printed.

Harper stressed that his party's child care program would also benefit stay-at-home moms. Both programs would cost approximately the same amount – about $10 billion, according to *The Star*. Layton complained that the Liberals stole their child care program from the NDP.

During the televised debate, Martin kept claiming credit for the present healthy state of the Canadian economy, while the other three never let him forget Adscam. Layton sought to align Martin with big business, and Martin sought to associate the NDP with limitless government spending.

Duceppe of the Bloc Quebecois charged that Harper longs for times past – before child care, before Kyoto and way before the rise of the welfare state. During the French debate, he hammered the Liberals for their unprincipled shenanigans during the unity plebiscite, charging that they have lost the authority to govern.

It remains to be seen whether Canadians give any one party the authority to govern. According to the last polls we saw before going to print, Canadians would elect a minority Conservative government, but the same poll also registered a high level of uncertainty among voters.

A lot may depend on the weather come the end of January.

A vision for Canada Part 2

Janet Epp Buckingham

The first part of this article was in the Dec.19 issue

International religious freedom

As Christians, we are called to care for our neighbor, particularly the vulnerable. Our neighbors include all people around the world because God has created and loves them. As Christians, we are particularly to remember other Christians who are persecuted for their faith. More than 200 million people in over 60 countries are denied their basic human rights because of their Christian faith. Members of Parliament may express concern about religious persecution and ask for religious freedom to be respected through correspondence or during international visits.

In April 2005, the federal government released an International Policy Statement. It did not even mention religious persecution, although it is a vital part of international human rights.

How do you plan to address issues of religious persecution internationally?

Global poverty reduction

As Christians, we are called to care for the poor. We are also called to uphold the dignity of all persons. We can encourage our national leaders to do the same.

International development was low on the priority list. In 2000, Canada signed the Millennium Declaration, committing itself to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, aimed at cutting abject global poverty in half by 2015. Canada has also promised to increase its contribution to Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 0.7 percent of its Gross National Income (GNI). It is an achievable goal; six countries have already reached it, and five more are on their way. Canada has neither met the goal nor made a plan to do so. Our current ODA contribution is less than half of the goal, at 0.3 percent GNI.

In the federal government's April 2005 International Policy Statement, international development was low on the priority list. Global poverty reduction must become a high priority in Canada's international policy. That means meeting the 0.7 percent GNI goal for ODA, developing agricultural trade rules and practices that benefit the poor, and committing to debt relief for poor countries.

What steps will you take to ensure that global poverty reduction is a priority in Canada's international policy?

Do you support the commitment to increase Official Development Assistance to 0.7% of GNI?

Will you commit to a timeline for achieving that goal, including interim targets?

What concrete measures will you take to make agricultural trade fair and beneficial for poor countries?

The environment

God's love and care for creation is evident throughout the Scriptures. It is also clear that God delights in his entire creation, not just the parts relevant or useful to people. All things in heaven and on earth, spiritual and physical, are his handiwork. Humans were not created separate from the physical creation, over and above it. Rather, we are part of it. We were created by God along with all the other things and living creatures, and God has created us to be stewards of his creation. Individually and collectively, we are accountable to God for what we do with and on this earth.

What measures would you take to protect the environment in Canada and to ensure Canada does its part to protect the environment globally?

Government integrity

The Bible reminds political leaders to serve the Lord with fear and trembling. Public office remains a high calling, despite falling out of favor in recent Canadian polls. The very nature of public office means leaders are people who must give a greater account.

What steps will you take to restore public confidence in their elected leaders?

What personal traits do you believe an elected official must possess to fulfill his/her role with integrity and contributing to the greater good?

Canada and reconciliation

The Bible calls Christians to be peace-makers. Indeed, the apostle Paul always introduces his letters by asking God to grant grace and peace. Canada is divided, with alienation felt by those in Western Canada, in Quebec and in our Aboriginal communities.

What steps will you take to bring reconciliation among communities in Canada?

Big list: big questions

Can we find 307 men and women of integrity, leadership and vision? The commentators sure don't think so. But let's not give up. Check out your candidates. Check out the parties. Then make up your own mind.

Janet Epp Buckingham is director of Law and Public Policy and general legal counsel for the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada in Ottawa.

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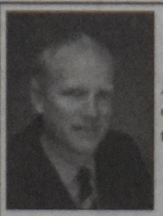

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Editorial

The crisis of contemporary Christianity

Harry der Nederlanden

There have long been those in the West who have expressed anxiety that we are losing contact with the world view, ideas, or principles that have served as the source not just of democratic freedoms but also of most of the rest of our culture. George Grant, the great Canadian philosopher, for example, devoted his career to an attempt to keep us rooted in a tradition of thought and action that was quickly losing out to American modes of rootlessness. Another very well-known thinker, Alasdair MacIntyre, also rejected a modernity that seems unable to provide foundations for ethical reflection to recover older traditions that will do so.

They are just two of many who worry that the edifice of our political, economic and religious institutions and of our values in general is now without any grounding, because not just our intellectuals, but most of our people, too, have cast aside those beliefs and ideas that gave birth to them and sustained them for hundreds of years. It is now a castle without foundations. Depending on the metaphor, it is either a castle floating in air or a tree cut off from its roots or a vehicle that has come loose from its mooring and is running away with us.

For a long time, we in North America have imbibed the spirit of the frontier, glad to be freed from the weight of European traditions, we've been oriented to the future, to the unlimited possibilities provided by this continent.

In the last couple of decades we have become worried that in the process we have been hurtling headlong into a future that is not good for us, not good for our children, not good for our environment: is unsustainable, not just materially but also emotionally and spiritually. It is destroying our families and communities. While only a short time ago our countries were beacons of hope, they are quickly becoming object examples of greed, waste and a way of life devoted to self-indulgence and inanity.

Perhaps this is more or less how it has always been. There have always been those who warn of crisis. In fact, after the Second World War a school of theology indebted to Karl Barth went by the name of Crisis Theology. The ideologies of fascism and communism, to say nothing of enlightenment rationalism and scientism, cast a dark shadow over the first half of the 20th century. Halfway through the first decade of the new century, the talk of crisis is once again becoming shrill.

But even in Christian circles, those who seek to awaken us point in quite different directions. Pope Benedict, like Pope John Paul II, has issued strident warnings against the nihilism of western thought and culture, urging a return to ways that many now think of as conservative. Evangelical leaders like Charles Colson and James Dobson have uttered similar warnings, but with a more right-wing American flavor. Wendell Berry calls for a Christian way of life that is more earth-friendly. And Jim Wallis pushes for a Christianity more animated by concern for the poor and the marginalized.

All seem to me to be far less optimistic and future oriented than Christians have been for the latter part of the 20th century and much more concerned about what we have lost or are about to lose.

Os Guinness, the author of *The Gravedigger Files* and a number of other books, has added his voice to that of the prophets of crisis.

In a series of articles on kairosjournal.org, he points out that only in America is Christianity flourishing in the West. "The Christian faith has essentially lost Europe for the time being, at the level of both leaders and ordinary citizens," he writes. And even in the US it has lost most of its influence in the universities, the media and professional associations. Only in business and politics does it still exert influence (areas ironically that have hardly been ethical models of late).

It isn't all bad news, of course, for Christianity has seen wildfire growth in Africa, Asia and Latin America. "We are on the verge of a radical new possibility," says Guinness: "a post-Christian West and a post-Western Christian church."

He calls this moment in history our Augustinian moment, because of its similarity to the time when Augustine reflected on the fall of the Christianized Roman empire.

He traces the crisis in Christianity to very fundamental origins:

> "A central reason for the weakness of the Christian faith in the West is the deficiency of discipleship among those who are Christians, including many leaders who are committed to Jesus Christ."

This is why Christianity has so little impact even in areas where it is numerically strong.

Guinness calls for a "third mission' to the West. The first was the conversion of the Roman Empire; the second, the conversion of the barbarians, now Europe. It seems a hopeless challenge, concedes Guinness, but he urges:

> "There have been times in the past when things have been far worse than they are today, and those who responded in faith were far fewer than those who stand ready to respond now. But the challenge is the same: to trust only in God, to have no fear, to let God be God, and watch and wait to see what he alone can do."

The task is not first of all one of gaining political influence or launching new church growth strategies, but it is "an essentially spiritual, theological and evangelical task." It is a task that starts at home. Evangelicalism's biggest danger comes not from outside, for today it has become more cultural than evangelical. It needs first of all to reform itself, to purify itself of much of its cultural baggage. In fact, it must recognize the need for continual reformation and revival.

> "The presence of sin and the passing of time mean that spiritual life declines, error and heresy overgrow truth, and the need for reformation and revival is constant. But the answer for the Church is never to go forward, seduced by the fallacy of 'the newer the truer' or 'the latest is greatest.' As both St. Francis and Martin Luther demonstrate clearly, the Church always goes forward by first going back — which is the heartbeat of what it means to be evangelical."

Especially in the US evangelicals are beginning to speak of themselves as a persecuted minority. But playing the victim card is the very opposite of taking up our cross as followers of Jesus Christ, warns Guinness.

Many of the things that give evangelicalism a bad name have little to do with the gospel. Many of the prejudices against us are in part justified. Critics like to point to the evils and excesses of Christendom. Such criticisms are only part of the truth, of course; they ignore the many gifts and reforms that the West owe to the Christian faith, but they do contain some truth.

Evangelicalism is constantly painted as ignorant, prejudiced, irrational and reactionary, as in the recent debates about evolution and homosexuality. Conveniently forgotten are the great intellectual traditions of science, art and culture that grew out of the Christian faith. Christians are attacked when they introduce religion into the public square but also for having a faith that is so otherworldly that it has no impact on public life.

To address these prejudices, unfair though they be, we must do so as followers of Christ, which means that we do not demonize our critics or deny our failings. Instead, we must see that we are indeed at fault for allowing our faith to be adulterated by modernity and for failing to integrate faith and life.

Guinness speaks of a "subtle but profound" worldliness that has seduced us and shaped us even as we enjoyed its blessings. Christianity has become a captive of the modern world.

"The deepest problem of the Western church is the Western church," declares Guinness, not external rivals, enemies or traitors.

Community has been displaced by individualism, authority by personal preference, and the exclusive claims of biblical truth have become mixed with other loyalties and other beliefs. Above all, the link between belief and Christian behavior has been eroded.

Our biggest failing is not our lack of a Christian mind but in failing to live as followers of Christ. It is our living, not our thinking, that is the deepest problem, says Guinness.

We cannot seek to escape our captivity in modern culture by employing the tools of modernity. It is not strategies for numerical growth, political influence, power and prosperity that will save us, but only if we allow ourselves to be reformed by the power of God in our lives as well as in our minds and if we "let God be God."

Something to reflect on and to pray about as we enter into a new year.

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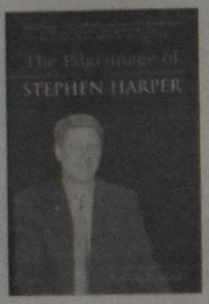
Stephen Harper: big tent conservative



The Pilgrimage of Stephen Harper
Lloyd Mackey
Toronto: ECW Press.
Pp.221. $32.95.
(This is the second book on Harper that has recently come out. *Stephen Harper and the Future of Canada* by Quebec journalist William Johnson and published by McCLelland and Stewart was released in June of this year.)

Reviewed by Bert Witvoet

Lloyd Mackey is eminently qualified to write a political biography of Stephen Harper: he is a seasoned journalist, he has previously written a political story about the Mannings – *Like Father like Son: Ernest Manning and Preston Manning* – and, unlike most political journalists, he is interested in the interplay of faith and politics. The author is a Christian himself with sufficient experience and ability to distance himself when needed from his subject. Nevertheless, *The Pilgrimage of Stephen Harper* is a sympathetic account of how the current leader of the newly formed Conservative Party has pursued his political journey during the past 25 years.

Faith journey

Stephen Harper has personal ties to various regions of Canada. He has roots in New Brunswick, where he spent summers visiting his grandparents. He grew up in Toronto, Ontario, studied and makes his residence in Calgary, Alberta, and has lived and worked in Ottawa. His geographical moves mirror somewhat his development as a Christian thinker. The Harpers belonged to a United Church in Toronto and were solid members of the Liberal Party. When Stephen moved to Calgary, he first joined a Presbyterian Church and, later, a more evangelical Missionary Alliance church. He also became more conservative in his economic and political thinking through his studies at the University of Calgary, his friendship with people like Preston Manning, and his association with the "Calgary School" and the Fraser Institute think-tank. (Maybe it's the Alberta air that leaches liberalism out of one's soul!)

Mackey describes Harper as moving from religious scepticism to a strong cerebral Christian faith. (p. 15) The word "cerebral" captures something of the man's character. Other leaders in his party have compared him to former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, in that his mind is every bit as analytical as was Trudeau's, and he is able to articulate his ideas with great eloquence. He lacks Trudeau's charisma and playfulness (playboy-ness?), but those who know him speak of him as a warm and caring person. As a follower of Jesus, Harper believes that a good leader must first be a good servant. (p.15) He is also considered to be a good listener.

No deep secrets

Mackey debunks the idea that Harper is a scary person with a hidden agenda. Harper has always been up front with his ideas, he says, as many of his policy papers will attest to. And what he wants for Alberta, for example, is no more than what the country has given to Quebec all along. People have questioned his loyalty to Canada (remember the recent question posed at a news conference: "Mr. Harper, do you love Canada?" Anyone else would have gushed a strong sentiment, but Harper, in typical fashion, began to give a rational explanation of his position on Canada where a simple "yes" would have sufficed).

Where Harper's philosophy is most distinct from that of the other main parties is in his belief that a market economy is healthier than a demand economy – an economy that is destabilized by too much government intervention. Not that Harper sees no significant role for the state in economics, or that he does not care for the poor, but he does not think that the government is very helpful in addressing poverty. Harper rejects Keynesian economics that "collected the whole liberal left movement in the United States" before Reaganomics was introduced. (p.37) Mackey explains that Trudeau set in motion years of deficit spending, which Mulroney could not undo. Paul Martin was able to reverse the process when he was finance minister under Chretien and lately as prime minister, but he did it by increasing taxation (especially through the GST), rather than through policies that would have reduced government spending. (p.38)

A big tent

Harper is not interested in single-issue politics, as are some of the so-called "socons" (social conservatives) who are mainly interested in moral issues like abortion and same-sex marriage. Harper wants a big tent for his party that includes six kinds of conservative streams identified in the book as: fiscal conservatism (wants controls on government spending and economic intervention), social conservatism (emphasizes pro-life and pro-family positions), democratic populism (seeks involvement of 'common people' in policy setting), progressive conservatism (encourages moderate changes and economic nationalism), British Toryism (wants to preserve traditional institutions and veer away from American style conservatism) and Libertarianism (places a strong emphasis on free will and unrestricted liberty). (pp.53, 54)

What often sets Harper apart from fundamentalist social conservatives is his realization that real gains can be made only incrementally, that is, piece by piece. Fundamentalists are often idealistic and seek an all-or-nothing approach to politics (think of the Christian Heritage Party). Fundamentalists consider a piece-meal approach a surrender of principles. Readers may recall the debate around abortion years ago and how Jake Epp, a devout Mennonite Conservative Cabinet Minister from Winnipeg, sought a partial reduction in the number of abortions that were taking place in our country. Our own Gerald Vandezande also pleaded for this approach. But Epp and Vandezande were accused of betraying pro-life anti-abortion principles. Harper thinks that conservatives should be satisfied if the agenda is moving in the right direction, even if slowly. (p.139)

Socialism threatens family

Harper believes that Canadian conservatives "need to rediscover Burkean or social conservatism because a growing body of evidence points to the damage the welfare state is having on our most important institutions, particularly the family. Conservatives have to give much higher place to confronting threats posed by modern liberals to this building block of society." (p. 169)

A policy announcement made in the current election platform by the Conservatives, promising money for parents so they can decide what kind of day care they want for their children, highlights the difference between the Conservatives on the one hand and the Liberals and the New Democratic Party on the other. The latter two distrust the ability of parents to make the right decisions for their children (remember the "beer and popcorn" statement by Liberal advisor Scott Reid?) They prefer to provide government money for public daycare facilities only. (The same approach is used by the Ontario Liberals when it comes to funding only public schools.)

Timely account

The Pilgrimage of Stephen Harper provides the reader with valuable insights into the evangelical legacy that came out of the former Canadian Alliance as well as a better understanding of what the policies are that Stephen Harper and the Conservatives embrace. The overall picture of Harper that emerges is that of a man with deep insight, great integrity and strong convictions. It does much to dispel false accusations leveled by political opponents, also in this current run-up to the elections.

The book shows reliable knowledge of the inner workings of political parties and the relationships between Stephen Harper and well-known political entities like Peter Mackay, Preston Manning, Stockwell Day and others. It even focuses, though briefly, on the somewhat confusing role played by Belinda Stronach. For anyone who wants to learn more about the political scene in Ottawa and the tensions that exist between the Conservatives and other parties, or even tensions between the West and Ottawa, this is a good introduction or refresher course.

The book highlights especially the promising changes to the political landscape that a man of the stature of Stephen Harper could bring to Canada were he ever to become the Prime Minister of Canada.

(Warning to readers: my review is slightly colored by my political views. As reviewer, I do not feel competent to evaluate the overall economic and political strategy of the Conservative Party and of Stephen Harper, in particular. I'm not an economist. Personally, I don't believe there is a strategy that can do justice to the complex needs of a modern, sin-distorted society. But I have a preference for the approach of Harper's Conservatives, over that of Paul Martin's Liberals and Jack Layton's New Democrats. The Green Party is too green and the Christian Heritage Party is too heritage. To be honest, I don't have much faith in a market economy nor in a demand economy. Nevertheless, because I believe that as a society we need to turn from a persistent emphasis on individual rights, victimization and freedom from moral restraints, as well as a constant reliance on spiritually hollowed-out public institutions, I do favor the approach by the Conservatives. Hence my favorable review.)

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Mission

A volunteer's snapshots of Uganda

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema and Rachel VanderVeen

After teaching English to children in Seoul, Korea for fourteen months, my daughter Rachel, 26, volunteered for the African Child Foundation (ACF) in Uganda. For six weeks she taught in the ACF library, which was used as a classroom for four hours each morning for children whose parents or caretakers could not afford the fees for government operated schools.

According to its mission statement, the ACF is a Christian organization which strives "to proactively respond to the increasing number of orphans, whose parents have died of HIV\AIDS virus, by supporting and educating the wider community." Through child care and support, youth skills development, child counseling, advocacy and lobbying, health care, income generation schemes, and education, ACF hopes to contribute to Ugandans' well being and to offer them hope for the future. The organization's directors are Ugandan nationals. The day-to-day work is done by a small staff of local and international volunteers.

Reading statistics about the staggering death toll in Africa and worldwide due to HIV\AIDS can be a numbing experience. Because of the enormity of the problem, it's easy to lose sight of individuals struggling to survive. Rachel's "word" snapshots of Uganda put a face on human suffering, on the efforts to try to alleviate it, and on a myriad of obstacles that stand in the way of doing so. Here's what she wrote in her journal about some of her experiences.

Rachel VanderVeen with Ugandan infant

*** Yesterday we went to Katebo, which is located two hours west of Kampala on Lake Victoria. There is so much suffering. There are no words to encompass this reality. To suffer; to be hungry; to have nothing; to be uneducated – we will never be able to understand these people's plights.

During the afternoon session of the women's empowerment group, I noticed a girl of about four-years-old who was barely able to keep her eyes open. She was the epitome of lethargy. I had a few digestive cookies in my backpack, so I gave one to her. Over the next 25 minutes she nibbled away at it. When she had finished eating it, I gave her another cookie, which she ate in a similar manner. Then suddenly, after sitting in the same position for more than two hours, she rose and slowly walked over to a plastic container, which was buried almost entirely in the dirt. She stepped up onto it and began to bounce – a sudden burst of energy from merely a cookie. Such bursts of energy are common in well-fed children, but are uncommon in malnourished children.

Tim and Rena Dam, CRWRC's HOPE interns in Uganda, visiting Apollina, a member of the family which represents CRWRC's South\East Africa's Free a Family program."

I must keep this image and others like it vivid in my mind. I must not forget because as we forget we slowly re-enter our self-involved universes.

*** The little girl, no more than four-years-old, struggled to keep her four-month-old sister's blanket from dragging in the red earth while she balanced her on her hip. She was trailed by a toddler, who was deathly afraid of the muzungus (white people). The toddler kept shouting, "Bye, muzungus! Bye, muzungus!" He didn't want to walk down the dirt path because that would put him in arms' reach of these foreign creatures with no color. Wise at four years of age, the girl insisted that the toddler follow her. In these three children I witnessed what Uganda – and Africa – faces.

*** I often have to remind myself that my expectations of the children I am tutoring needs to be altered. To compare their situation to the teaching environment and the children's aptitude in Seoul, Korea would be irrational.

*** This afternoon I participated in the outreach program, which was designed to connect with the more unfortunate people within Ndejje's community. Cotsi, the music program coordinator, and I walked down the hill to visit with an elderly woman who is caring for her eighteen grandchildren, all less than twelve years of age. The eldest had been sent home from school that morning because the grandmother was unable to pay the school fees for the second half of the semester. Now that she is unable to attend school, she is expected to take on many more responsibilities. When we arrived, she was cooking maize porridge for their first meal of the day, while the grandmother was peeling sweet potatoes for their dinner. It was nearly 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon. Most of her grandchildren's parents have either died or abandoned them, which puts her in the position of sole provider, even though she has no steady income. Such cases of abandonment are common.

*** Today is Independence Day – Uganda's 43rd year as an independent nation. We went into Kampala this afternoon and the streets were bare. The city center had been abandoned. It was rather eerie, especially because the police were out in full force on Kampala Road. President Museveni was speaking at a rally, which is where the crowds must have been.

*** The moment I gave him – a child of no more than two years of age – my attention, he was hooked. I could not make him smile for the life of me. Athough he refused to smile, he had no intention of leaving my side. I asked several of the older students if they knew where his siblings or caretaker were, but no one did.

*** The children I tutor desperately want to learn anything and everything. Their attentive attitudes speak of how grateful they are that someone is taking the time to teach them. Their glowing faces remind me that I have taken my education for granted. Without it, I would not be here in Uganda today.

*** The children are terrified at the prospect of visiting the hospital. On Friday morning, Rebecca, a ten-year-old student of mine, walked into the library followed by several flies. They were hovering over her, landing now and then to feast on the fungus, which had taken up permanent residence on her head. I had noticed it a few days prior, but thought it was a bit of dirt.

When I asked if someone could look at it and perhaps remedy the situation, Marium and Joyce, local employees, agreed to do so. But when I brought Rebecca into the ACF clinic they merely glanced at her head and said there was nothing they could do about the fungus. They said that she needed an injection and pills, which they couldn't provide. I understood that they were unable to help her, but I found their lack of compassion discomforting. Had they become desensitized or was I being overly sensitive? They have accepted that there is only so much they can do and they leave it at that.

Joy, the coordinator of the children's program, managed to balance this reality with compassion. She took the time to speak with Rebecca about the problem at hand. Apparently, the flies were attracted not to the fungus, but to the herbal concoction that her mother had applied. When Joy told Rebecca that one of the muzungus – namely, me – would accompany her to the clinic, she became petrified, burst into tears, and refused to go.

A few days later, I convinced Rebecca to visit the clinic or, rather, Cotsi threatened her in Luganda, the local language.

Mission

Rebecca, petrified of injections, began to keen the moment the visit to the clinic was mentioned. She finally conceded, but there was hesitancy in every step she took towards the clinic. Once on the bodaboda (a small motorcycle), her spirits seemed to pick up. Her fears were not confirmed. The doctor prescribed several different medications, but an injection wasn't necessary. The clinic didn't have any of the medications in stock, which meant that we – several of the volunteers – would have to cover the cost. The clinics are government funded, but they often do not have the supplies necessary to support the health of the community.

Even after we explained Rebecca's schedule for taking the medication to her father, who is also on a regimented schedule of pills to combat the onset of AIDS, he completely neglected to give her the pills. When I asked Rebecca the next day if she had taken her pills, she replied that she hadn't.

I brought the issue up in the office and Marium, in her direct manner, began shouting at me, "I told you so!" At first I was offended by Marium's reaction, but as she continued to rant, I began to understand why she reacted the way she did when she said to me, "If they don't love themselves, they will lack the motivation to care for themselves and their children."

That afternoon I took the first of many treks down to Rebecca's home. Day after day I checked up on her. By the end of the fifth day, Rebecca sighed at the sight of me trudging up the hill or climbing off a bodaboda. Several weeks later, I was informed that the medication had taken effect and that her head was healing.

*** ACF claims to be an organic organization. This means that the volunteers are free to follow their interests, which, in most situations, would be advantageous. Yet, this freedom paired with inefficiency has created an atmosphere of confusion as to what our roles as volunteers are. ACF's goals are rather idealistic and their intentions are disguised beneath a veil of misconceptions.

For example, the volunteers are encouraged to participate in the outreach program. According to ACF, the position entails helping with housework, communicating with the families, and giving them support. In reality, communication is impossible due to the language barrier, and in terms of helping with housework, the opportunity rarely arises.

Joy told one of the international volunteers that the volunteers' participation was encouraged in the outreach program solely so that they would have the opportunity to witness the people's needs and then contribute through donations. I found her honesty refreshing, but the information itself was discouraging.

*** There has been a large influx of students in the library program – from nine up to fifteen in one day. But how can we turn the expectant children away? They have nowhere to go, nothing to do, no one to care about them. And what are one or two more children? How much space can one child take up? But if you add one plus one plus one, suddenly there is a crowd.

*** I find that living in this country allows me to keep things in perspective. The constant bombardment of images of suffering and poverty keep me in check. Although in Canada I wouldn't be considered wealthy, the moment I set foot in Africa I became a muzungu. Just as we are unable to comprehend the trials of poverty, they are incapable of acknowledging the degrees of wealth.

*** Frank is a 10-year-old orphan who lives with his three half-brothers. The oldest is seventeen and is caring for the three of them. When Julie, a volunteer, discovered Frank, he had pus running out of his ears. By the time I met him, his condition had improved greatly. He still had difficulty hearing, which meant that everyone was constantly shouting in his ear. However, he was able to study.

I often tutored him in the afternoons because he was so far behind all the other children. He was having difficulty picking up the alphabet because he couldn't make the connection between the letter and the phonetic sound.

We were informed that the ear, throat and nose doctor was coming to the clinic that the volunteer nurses, Beth and Marjon, work at on Mondays and Fridays, so Beth took Frank and waited there all day. The Ugandan concept of time differs greatly from the Western world's, so it was no surprise when the doctor didn't show up. This particular doctor visits Ndejje's local clinic only once every two to three months, so Beth and Marjon decided to take Frank to a private clinic. The doctors there said that if he had surgery to drain the fluid out of his ears, his hearing would be restored and there wouldn't be permanent damage. The surgery cost 500,000 USH (Ugandan Shillings), which is approximately $300.00 CDN.

*** Children are graduating from P7 (elementary school) who are incapable of speaking or understanding the language which they have been taught in. Such high expectations of a malnourished generation whose families have been demolished by AIDS are unreasonable! Every child that I have interacted with has been affected by the consequences of a struggling education system.

President Museveni claims that unless African nations put an end to the export of raw materials for measly revenue they will never be able to climb out of poverty. This may be true, but more importantly I believe that they need to review their education system. Unfortunately, such a review is unlikely simply because Uganda has received high acclaim for its Universal Education System, which Uganda recently implemented. Every child is welcome to attend classes P1 to P7 for free. What they neglect to mention is that it is necessary to pay many small fees for things such as chairs, notebooks, and other supplies to enrol in the program. How does the government expect children, who often only eat one meal a day, to pay the fees?

Rachel and children

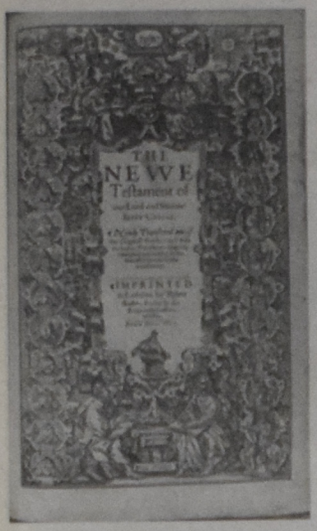
Market scene

*** When impoverished Ugandans see a muzungu, they believe that they are witnesses to great wealth, and they believe that they are entitled to be given something. Even if they are informed that in the Western world the average volunteer is in a lower income bracket, they cannot understand that we do not identify ourselves with the wealthy. And rightly so, for they have nothing. How do you differentiate nothing from nothing?

*** The people need to be taught how to sustain themselves. If you give them money or even food, what do they do the next time they are hungry? Will they take the initiative if someone is standing there willing to do it for them? Of course not.

*** I had the opportunity to spend my final days in Uganda with my dear friends, Tim and Rena Dam, who are Christian Reformed World Relief Committee's HOPE interns there. They live in Katakwi, which is northeast of Kampala. One of their responsibilities is to inform North Americans through newsletters of the present living conditions. They regularly visit with Apollina's family, the family which represents CRWRC's South\East Africa's Free a Family program. The funds raised in North America are distributed throughout Apollina's community, rather than given solely to her family.

Church



Manitoba College's treasured Bible may have belonged to King James

Solange De Santis

St. John's College, a small Anglican college located on the University of Manitoba's campus in Winnipeg, has discovered it owns a half-million-dollar book: a first edition of the King James Bible, printed in London in 1611.

Shelley Sweeney, head of archives and special collections at the University of Manitoba Libraries, said there were several printings in 1611 of the new English translation, commissioned by King James I and renowned for the power and poetry of its language.

It was only recently, she said in an interview, that scholars discovered St. John's copy was from the first print run, since it has several distinct errors that were corrected in later printings. English scholar Paul Dyck at Canadian Mennonite University worked with Ms. Sweeney on research. For instance, in Genesis 42, verse 28, "an other" is corrected later to "another," she said. It is also a so-called "he" Bible that mistakenly refers to Ruth, in the Book of Ruth, as "he," an error that was corrected in some subsequent editions but also appeared in others.

Only about 50 copies of the first edition, first printing of the King James Bible exist. In 2001, one sold at auction for more than $400,000 US (C$466,000), Ms. Sweeney said. The book is a substantial tome, with 1.25-centimetre oak covers, leather binding and metal embossing, she said. It measures 43 cm x 28 cm, is 13 cm thick and weighs about 16 kilograms. "It says, to me, 'I'm 400 years old and, baby, I'm proud of it,'" Ms. Sweeney remarked. The book also contained a card, which apparently dates from the 1940s or 1950s, noting that it was believed to have been in the possession of King James himself.

However, it is missing its frontispiece – the illustration on the page that faces or immediately precedes the title page of a book. "It could have worn out or somebody razored it out to sell," she noted. The omission could reduce the value and was, until now, a hindrance to scholars seeking to discover whether it was from the first printing. But it also includes a rare page detailing the genealogy of Jesus.

St. John's has no intention of selling its treasure, which arrived in Manitoba in 1897. A London priest named Rev. Daniel Greatorex donated a large number of Bibles and other books to the college at about the same time as Bishop Robert Machray was making trips to England, seeking funds for St. John's College, which had been founded in 1866. St. John's is one of the founding colleges of the University of Manitoba.

Bishop Machray came to Canada from England in 1865 to oversee the vast western diocese of Rupert's Land and in 1893 was elected the first primate of the then-Church of England in Canada.

Mr. Greatorex was a well-known clergyman who ministered in the East End of London and was quoted several times in newspapers about social conditions there at the time of the Jack the Ripper murders. "He would have wanted to support the teaching of religious instruction in western Canada," Ms. Sweeney commented.

The book currently resides in a vault, but is accessible to scholars.

East-West divide still pervades German churches and links with press

Peter Kenny

Geneva (ENI) – Fifteen years after unification, Germany remains divided on old East-West lines as far as church membership is concerned. And it also has the same split when it comes to the way churches deal with the press, showing old habits die hard even under a new political system, says this year's winner of the John Templeton prize for the European Religion Writer.

Tomas Gaertner won the prize for three articles published by the daily newspaper *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten* (DNN) and delivered the annual lecture that goes with the prize in Geneva on 15 December. He said as far as church membership is concerned, about 76 per cent of the population is either Protestant or Roman Catholic in the West, while in the East it is about 26 per cent.

Church of the Holy Spirit, Heidelberg, Germany

"In the state of Saxony, where I come from, 21 per cent of the population belongs to the Protestant church and four per cent to the Catholic church. Christians in Saxony, as throughout eastern Germany, are a minority," said the Dresden journalist speaking at the John Knox centre in the Swiss city.

He noted that in 1989, "during the peaceful revolution", the churches were held in high esteem. "In 1990 the number of people joining the church was 10 times that of 1980. Sociologists suggest the reason was that people no longer had to fear difficulties if they belonged to the church. But after just a few years the number of people joining the church fell back to the level in western Germany," explained Gaertner.

"Certainly a few people have found a new interest in God but they cannot keep up with the increasing number of atheists," he said, noting that in eastern Germany it had been normal – going back two or three generations – not to belong to the church.

And until 1989, Gaertner explained, churches in communist-ruled East Germany had no experience of dealing with the media, unlike their counterparts in the West. The Dresden journalist recounted how a pastor from eastern Germany had once told him, "We had to keep a low profile. This fear of the outside world still sits very deep."

Even today, there is a noticeable difference about how church people from the West and from the East deal with journalists, Gaertner pointed out. "On the whole, the ones that come from the West are more open."

"The ones from the East, however, without years of experience of journalists, are extremely suspicious, circumspect," he said. "On the whole they are stiff, formal, clinging to incomprehensible theological formulations. They appear to be haunted by the fear they might say something wrong. They prefer to say something noncommittal and vacuous – and then say they want to read it before it is published."

**The aim of the Templeton award is to honor journalists who write about religion in the secular press with accuracy, impartiality and with an ecumenical spirit. It is administered by the Conference of European Churches (CEC) on behalf of the John Templeton Foundation, named after a Wall Street investor turned philanthropist with a passion for connecting the secular and spiritual worlds.*

UN envoy Egeland warns of worsening situation in Zimbabwe

Harare (ENI) – The United Nations is warning about food shortages in Zimbabwe, echoing concerns by a top UN relief envoy who has visited the southern African nation where he was briefed by church leaders about a controversial slum clearing operation.

An agent of Zimbabwe's Central Intelligence Organization scuffled with a UN official as the state security agent tried to force his way into a meeting earlier in December between UN envoy Jan Egeland and church leaders in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second city.

Egeland, the UN emergency coordinator, was in the southern African country to assess effects of "Operation Murambatsvina" ("Drive out Trash" in the local Shona language) which displaced more than 700,000 people between May and July.

He met with church leaders from various denominations, including Roman Catholic Archbishop Pius Ncube of Bulawayo, known as a fierce critic of President Robert Mugabe. With them he made field visits to several camps of people displaced by the operation which locals labeled "Zimbabwe's tsunami".

Speaking on December 8 on his return to New York, Egeland described the humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe as "extremely serious and worsening".

"It's heartbreaking to meet with people who are fearing the future because of food insecurity, which is affecting the majority of the people. Prices are spiraling as food is becoming increasingly scarce," said Egeland.

But President Mugabe said Egeland was a hypocrite who misrepresented facts during his visit to Zimbabwe.

"This Mr Egeland followed in the footsteps of his predecessor [UN special envoy Anna Tibaijuka], who released a one-sided report about the clean-up operation earlier this year," Mugabe said in an address to the annual conference of his ruling Zanu-Patriotic Front party.

On December 13, the UN said about 3 million of Zimbabwe's 12.7 million people are to receive monthly rations of cereals and edible seeds from the World Food Programme due to food access being hampered in many areas by a scarcity of grain, high inflation and fuel transport problems.

Speaking to the independent Zimbabwean newspaper published outside the country, Archbishop Ncube said pastors from various churches in Bulawayo were now actively searching for people displaced from some squatter settlements.

"It was hard to locate the [displaced] people. They had been dumped in the middle of nowhere, some 130 kilometres from Bulawayo, where there was no food, no water supply and no shelter," Ncube noted.

Church

Aid workers report that Darfur is becoming increasingly dangerous

Derk Segaar

NAIROBI (IRIN)–The humanitarian environment in the western Sudanese region of Darfur is becoming increasingly hostile and clashes between various groups continue to flare up, aid workers warned in mid December.

"There has been a huge increase in the number of attacks and robberies [on humanitarian workers]," said Mike McDonagh, senior humanitarian affairs officer at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Khartoum.

"Harassment is too weak a term," he added. "The physical danger aid workers have been exposed to over the last four months is a huge concern. We are very lucky that none of our staff has been killed so far."

In early December, Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and militia reportedly jointly attacked the villages of Hemmeda, Um Boru and Koka in the Um Nkunya area, approximately 40 km northeast of Nyala, the capital of South Darfur, the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) reported. The fighting resulted in an unknown number of civilian casualties and displaced about 7,000 people.

"The United Nations is concerned that the parties continue to violate the ceasefire agreement in what seems to be a resumption of the vicious circle of attacks and retaliation that we witnessed in earlier months," Radhia Achouri, UNMIS spokeswoman, told reporters in Khartoum on Wednesday.

According to reports, the attack had been launched against the rebel Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) in the area. In apparent retaliation the following day, the SLM/A attacked Donkey Dereisa, 60 km south of Nyala.

Another attack occurred in West Darfur a few days later when Arab militia raided the town of Congo Harasa. They destroyed all the wells that had been constructed by the humanitarian workers to provide water to the local population.

The ongoing deliberate destruction of farmland and crops was negatively affecting the optimistic agricultural output expected for this season, said Achouri. Redisplacements of large groups of civilians to settlements for internally displaced persons (IDPs) or to the outskirts of towns had also continued throughout Darfur.

According to the Geneva Conventions, destroying or rendering useless items essential to the survival of civilian populations is a war crime.

Aid workers in the region had also faced increased violence, threats, beatings and harassment, both within and outside the camps, according to sources in Darfur.

On December 5, 13 international NGO staff members in West Darfur were relocated with an African Union (AU) escort from Silea to the region's capital, Geneina, due to insecurity in the area.

Insecurity also forced the AU to airlift three international NGO staff from Kulbus to El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur State. Some local personnel remained behind to provide essential services.

Displaced people are still arriving in Abu Shouk and setting up makeshift shelters at the centre of the camp. Some of them have fled from recent attacks on villages in North Darfur, while others are searching for lost relatives who may have already settled here. Still others are seeking assistance from humanitarian aid agencies in the camp, as the limited stocks of food and medicine in nearby towns and villages is depleting rapidly.

On December 4, an international NGO compound was caught in the crossfire when fighting broke out between rebel groups and government forces near Masteri. A stray bullet hit a guard in the stomach.

On December 1, two unidentified gunmen shot and killed a Sudanese driver working for the Sudanese Red Crescent Society in the organization's premises in Abu Shouk IDP camp on the outskirts of El Fasher.

"The security situation in Abu Shouk is deteriorating each day," said a local source. "IDPs are reporting continuous military presence inside the camps during the nights with threats, detentions, harassment to the civil population and shootings."

Tension had also risen in IDP camps across Darfur due to the proliferation of people posing as community leaders and presenting inflated numbers of newly arrived IDPs to demand food and other relief items.

"They are not just businessmen – they are a real mafia. They sold around 12,000 rations of food in front of our noses," one aid worker said.

"This business is a time bomb for the stability of the camp," he added. "The [genuine community] leaders that try to collaborate [with us] are exhausted and very scared. All of us have been threatened many times."

The Darfur conflict erupted in February 2003 when the two main rebel groups, the SLM/A and the Justice and Equality Movement, took up arms to fight what they called the discrimination and oppression of the region by the Sudanese government.

The government is accused of unleashing militia – known as the Janjawid – on civilians in an attempt to quash the rebellion. According to the UN, the conflict continues to affect some 3.4 million people, of whom 1.8 million are IDPs and 200,000 have fled to neighboring Chad.

Indonesia creates democratic committees to approve church constructions

Celestino Reda, Samuel Rionaldo

JAKARTA (Compass) – Following the closure of scores of churches in the past two years, the Indonesian government is revising a controversial law that regulates places of worship. But Christian leaders fear the changes would do little to keep Muslim communities from blocking new churches or shutting down existing ones.

Signed into effect in 1969, the original joint ministerial decree requires all religious groups to apply for permits before setting up a place of worship. Neighbors in the immediate vicinity of a proposed church, mosque or Hindu temple must give their consent before a permit is granted.

In practice, local councils often refuse permits for church groups in majority-Muslim areas, while Muslims frequently build mosques without applying for permits.

Under proposed revisions, community members would be given even greater power to determine whether a church could be established, as "inter-faith forums" mirroring the religious make-up of the village and province would have to give approval before a church could even apply for a permit.

"If it comes down to a vote, Muslim leaders will influence others to vote against churches," Father Antonius Benny Susetyo, a spokesman for the Indonesian Bishops' Council, told Compass.

The government agreed to revise the laws after the Indonesian Council of Churches and the Indonesian Bishops' Council complained about a series of church closures in 2004. Officials promised to speed up the revision following an escalation in forced church closures in West Java in the latter half of this year.

Muslim radical groups such as the Islamic Defenders' Front have forced churches meeting in shopping malls and residential areas to close because they had no permits.

The offending churches say they had nowhere else to meet, since local councils had repeatedly turned down their permit applications.

Under the proposals of government lawyers, the inter-faith forums reflecting the make-up of the community – 80 percent Muslim in a community that is 80 percent Muslim, for example – would discuss permit applications and vote democratically.

Christian leaders are concerned that the simple arithmetic of the majority would bias the results. Muslims form 88 percent of the total population of Indonesia. Christians have a slim majority in just a handful of areas, such as North and Central Sulawesi and parts of the Malukan islands.

Along with Fr. Susetyo of the Bishops' Council, Winata Seirin from the Indonesian Council of Churches is concerned about the new proposals. "They look good on paper," he said, "but it will be hard, if not impossible, to implement them fairly."

Susetyo said the government has overlooked town-planning issues. Clear zoning rules are still needed to define which areas of a town or city may be set aside for places of worship. Without such guidelines, applications for building permits may be rejected or mired in red tape.

Muslims guard Jakarta's Christians

Tom McCawley

JAKARTA, INDONESIA – As church congregations offer up Christmas prayers here this weekend, thousands of Muslims will help keep the peace, standing guard outside.

After warnings of terrorist attacks over Christmas, police stepped up security, deploying over 17,000 officers in Jakarta, two-thirds of the city's force. Joining them in protecting hundreds of churches are some 7,000 guards from 11 different Islam-linked organizations.

Police are hoping "Operation Candle," which will run from Dec. 24 to Jan. 3, will be a symbol of goodwill between Christianity and Islam, ending a year that has seen many tests of Indonesia's religious harmony. It's part of a bid by authorities to move beyond physical security to include an ideological campaign against violent strains of Islam.

"Having Muslims and Christians work together for security, the authorities are hoping to show that pluralism is still strong," says Sri Yunanto, an Indonesian expert on radical Islamist groups.

Both Muslims leaders and police say they are trying to avoid a repeat of Christmas Eve five years ago, when 29 churches were bombed in an attack blamed on Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), a group that has been linked to Al Qaeda.

"We want to show we respect Christianity," says Irwan Arsidi, secretary of the Islamic Defender's Front (FPI), a hard-line vigilante group. "Besides," he grumbled, "we don't want to get blamed for any explosions."

Flying with the antelope

Christopher DeVinck

When the wind is up and the shutters bang against the house, I can fly. I spread open my beige coat, like wings, and a rush from the sky picks me up kite-like and I rise above the lawn and the chicken-coop. My house spins under me like a falling leaf and I fly to Japan. It was my notion as a child that Japan and flight were connected somehow: paper cranes, lanterns, mist and dragons.

I've had my recurring flying dream at least five times in my life. Sometimes I fly with my daughter as she laughs holding an umbrella. Once I flew with an antelope. A dream world is the place we go when the routine is dull, or confusing, or when we are tired and we need a sudden jolt of fantasy or monsters to stir up our sense of relief for normalcy.

Now at the end of another season, all begins to collapse. The flowers fade like dying dancers, drooping over in a last bow wearing faded skirts in silence to a new slumber of sudden death, and the stage of the garden is bare and empty. As an experiment, I rescued one pot of red-and-white impatiens and dragged it into this small room. Its leaves and flowers seem to lean against the French doors that separate it from the dead plants and the cold.

How long can I preserve late August in this room where the sun is warm and there is no frost?

Flowers possess the combined nature of life and death: life so sudden in its vibrant colors and soft petals, and death equally sudden in ice or lack of moisture. The ancient Greeks and Romans always wore crowns of flowers at their festivals and, with equal gravity, sprinkled the petals of flowers on the graves of their loved ones.

Flowers represent the impossible nature of what can happen given enough light and water, and speak in silence at the aroma of death.

I know of a college professor who once said to his students at an all women's college, "If you come to class tomorrow wearing flowers in your hair, I will give you all A's for the course." The next day, every young woman sat in class with a single rose in her hair.

This past Halloween the doorbell rang and there stood our neighbor and her two-year-old daughter dressed as Dorothy from The Wizard of Oz. She wore a blue, polka-dot dress, ruby slippers; her hair was beautifully woven into French braids. After she reached into the bowl for her bit of candy, she said "Thank you" with grace and ease, and then she stepped into the house. Her mother was a bit embarrassed as my wife and I said, "Oh that is perfectly fine. Wonderful. Let her come in." The little girl walked inside the living room, patted the head of our dog, and then she stepped into my writing room and found a Mickey Mouse plush doll on the shelf. She ran to the toy, hugged it and said, "Mickey Mouse!"

When the little girl and the mother walked away down the leaf covered street, I turned to my wife and whispered, "I'd like a granddaughter like her someday."

How best do we define the dreams that we collect along the way? When we were children, I remember how my older brother and I baked apples in the woods. We ran to the apple tree in the back yard and picked out the fattest apples we could find. He showed me how to core the center of the apple and pack it with brown sugar, then we wrapped the apples in aluminum foil. "Come on, Chrissy," he said, and we ran to the middle of the woods where he made, many years ago, a camp fire pit rimmed with stones. We gathered sticks and leaves around our raw apples, then my brother lit the fire and we sat side by side and watched the yellow flames glow against our faces. It was best to bake apples in the dark.

After a while, we reached into the smoke with two sticks and pulled out our two apples. They were hot. Steam rose through the slits in the aluminum foil. We broke open the wrapping, then, after a few minutes, we each took a bite from our sugar-filled apples and all of autumn and juice and sugar and time and dreams covered our tongues and cheeks. Who could not say that we were the lords of the forest.

Dreams are nothing more than a taste for what is beyond the natural world. The little girl from Oz floated in and out of the house, bringing us a message of grace and delight. The baked apples oozed melting brown sugar from another universe.

The poet W.B. Yeats, in his poem "The Phases of the Moon" wrote: "All dreams of the soul end in a beautiful man's or woman's body."

I will continue to battle the coming of winter, seeing how long my flowers will last in my little room; I will continue to ride on the back of the wild antelope with my daughter as we dream of our souls floating in autumn.

While I am heavy with the day's labor, I am light in my dreaming, which is why, as I sleep, it is easy to fly at night through the mist on a Japanese paper crane.

Reading the archives: Anti-Americanism in Canada 45 years ago

Harry der Nederlanden

In 1960, according to a *CC* story in the Jan. 6, 1961 issue, accusations of anti-Americanism were being leveled at the government just as they are nowadays. But at that time it was the Conservatives who were in power. The article alludes to a long history of anti-Americanism in the Progressive Conservative party and to Diefenbaker's appeals to Canadian nationalism.

A trade delegation from Cuba had recently visited Canada, and it had received an effusive welcome from Canada's trade minister. This was after the U.S. had asked Canada to join in its trade embargo against Castro, so the move angered the Americans, and the overly-warm welcome did nothing to make things better.

This struck many Canadians as needlessly antagonistic over toward the U.S., and the government was inundated with letters of protest. Most Canadians know on which side their bread is buttered.

According to the article, after overly optimistic speeches about the amount of trade that would transpire between the two countries, the Cuban delegation made itself very scarce. Turns out that, although Cuba was eager for trade, Cuba had no money to pay for what it needed.

The article speculated that the Cuban delegation was sent to Canada primarily to drive a wedge between Canada and the U.S. The accuracy of that observation was perhaps questionable: it was more likely that the officials came north to escape Castro's cigar smoke for a few days and to do a little shopping for their wives. The Russian goods available in Cuban stores left a little to be desired.

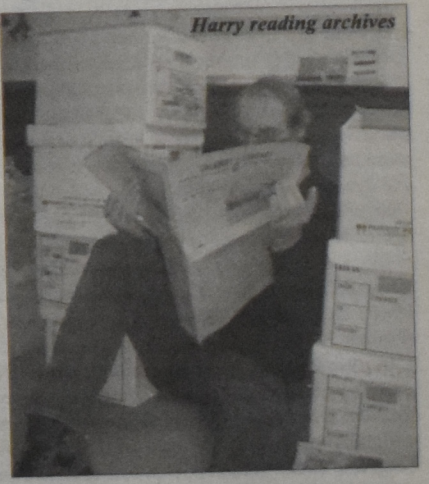
It was perhaps the winter of 1960 that I watched a hockey team from one of the Russian satellite countries do a little shopping in Edmonton. I was waiting for a bus on 101st street when the team came by, eagerly pressing their noses against the cold store windows and chattering excitedly at what they saw.

When they came to a women's clothing store, the volume and the excitement doubled. They were poking each other and obviously daring one another to go in. At last, after much boisterous laughter, they trooped in as a single team. I quickly tippled over to the window to watch. After all, I was a high school kid and a hockey fan.

The two diminutive sales clerks looked as if they were trying to hide behind the counter as the hockey players spread out through the small store. The athletes were quiet and sedate at first. But soon they were holding up nylons, oogling negligees, waving frilly underwear and hollering across the store at one another.

I didn't understand the language, but I'm quite sure it was, "Hey, Nikki, look at this! Wouldn't this look great on your wife?" There was loud laughter and wolf whistles and a great deal of enthusiastic customer appreciation. It was a mini-riot. It was Marxism being vanquished by consumerism.

The two little sales clerks looked like they were edging toward the door to make a run for it. But then the men began crowding toward the cash register loaded with purchases. Apparently, they had come with Canadian dollars. At the sight of money, the two clerks quickly recovered and, blushing modestly, began ringing up the purchases.



Harry reading archives

That night I had a bit of a nightmare. When the hockey team spilled onto the ice to take on the Edmonton Oilers, they were not wearing their hockey uniforms and pads, but, you guessed it, their latest purchases.

I awoke in a sweat, but recalling that dream many years later, I realized that what I was seeing was the first cracks in the Berlin wall. Made by frilly women's underwear.

It was often said that my generation grew up under the shadow of a mushroom cloud, but the vision of those tough commies entranced by nylon negligees obliterated all my fear of Russian missiles.

Yep, in those days, you could learn a lot about international relationships and economics just standing in the cold waiting for a bus. Especially if you were a hockey fan.

Positive outlook really makes a difference

Lisa M. Petsche

There is no shortage of information in the media about how to improve your health through positive lifestyle changes such as eating more nutritiously, exercising and not smoking. Did you know, though, that changing your mental attitude can also go a long way toward improving your well-being?

Even if you don't consider yourself a naysayer, make it a point over the next few days to scrutinize everything you think and say, you might be surprised.

For instance, how much of your self-talk and communication with others contains the words "can't," "don't," "shouldn't," "couldn't" and "never?" Do you frequently start sentences with "if only," "I can't believe," or "I hate it when?" And do you use phrases such as, "it's impossible," "I have no choice," "that's terrible," and "why me?"

Unfortunately, it's much easier to be pessimistic and critical of yourself, others and the world in general than to be optimistic and enthusiastic.

It doesn't help that the mass media thrives on disaster, failure and discord. All this publicity not only perpetuates the negativity but also creates more. And it's true that misery loves company: when we complain aloud, other people usually join in, reinforcing the gloom.

Negative thinking takes many insidious forms: doubt; worry; catastrophizing (magnifying the importance of upsetting events); focusing on our own shortcomings or those of others; seeing only the flaws in proposed plans; dwelling on what we perceive to be lacking in our lives; approaching life from the perspective of entitlement (believing that we are owed certain things); denial; inflexibility; hopelessness; and regarding the world as an uncaring, even hostile place.

By-products of such thinking include self-absorption; depression; defensiveness; self-criticism; destructive criticism of others; sarcasm; distrust; blame; jealousy; bitterness; self-pity; avoidance; indecision; chronic complaining; low self-esteem; resistance to change; helplessness and passivity.

Negativity is harmful not only to your physical and mental health – generating stress that can lead to illness – but also to your spiritual well-being. Here's how to cast it off and accentuate the positive instead.

- Limit your exposure to the news.
- Use positive self-talk. Emphasize phrases such as "I can," "I will" and "I choose."
- Be generous with praise and encouragement and cautious with criticism (giving only the constructive type).
- Cultivate a healthy sense of humor. Read the comics, watch a TV sitcom now and then, or rent funny movies. Don't take yourself or others too seriously.
- Accept realities you can't change and focus instead on those you can influence.
- Trust that there's a valuable lesson in every type of adversity. And remember that no matter what happens, you always have a choice about how to respond.

- Stay connected to people who care. Minimize contact with those who are negative or self-centred.
- Find an outlet for expressing your thoughts and feelings, such as talking with a friend or keeping a journal.
- Pick your battles; don't make a major issue out of every concern.
- Don't dwell on past mistakes, hurts or other unpleasant events.
- Look for the good in people and situations. Demonstrate empathy, give others the benefit of the doubt and practise forgiveness.
- Do something you enjoy each day: read, listen to music or take up a hobby.
- Identify sources of stress in your life, then eliminate as many as possible and learn to manage the rest. Practise relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing or yoga.
- Seek help from your family doctor or a counsellor if you continually feel sad, angry or overwhelmed.
- Let go of the need for perfection, and be flexible about plans and expectations. Take things one day at a time.
- Be receptive to learning new ways of doing things and trying new activities.
- Do nice things for others.
- Set aside some quiet time each day; it nurtures your spirituality and helps to keep you grounded.
- Finally, focus on the good things in your life, such as supportive relationships, and seek beauty and tranquility through appreciation of art and nature. Count your blessings and learn to live in the moment, enjoying life's simpler pleasures.

Lisa M. Petsche is a clinical social worker and a freelance writer whose specialties include mental health issues.

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick De Graaf

Opening the floodgates

When I visited New Brunswick a few years back, someone told me how critical it was for the dam operators on the Saint John River to get their timing right. If I understood correctly, a big part of the job is anticipating how much water might be coming. If the operators opens the gates too soon, too far and for too long, it might cause unnecessary flooding and deplete reserves needed to handle a dry spell in the summer. If, however, he didn't open them enough or too late to make room for a heavy rainfall, they would cause extensive flooding downstream and negate the protection and buffering that the dam was supposed to provide.

As you likely can tell I'm not an engineer – but I did experience heavy flooding on the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers in Bangladesh, as heavy rains in the North caused uncontrolled flushes of water that worked their way downstream to Bangladesh, wreaking all kinds of havoc.

What the engineers need to help them make a wise decision about opening floodgates is accurate information. Unreliable weather predictions and poor water level monitoring lead to bad decisions and damaging consequences.

It's this picture that comes to mind as I consider the text in Malachi about God and floodgates. God, the Creator Engineer Supreme, ready to throw open floodgates of blessing. So much water, so much blessing that we don't know what to do with it all. Isn't that a grand vision as we begin another year?

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. "Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the Lord Almighty."

Malachi 3: 10, 11

Unlike the engineer on the Saint John River, dependent on information that is sometimes inaccurate, God knows us well. A friend of mine (and also a member of the CSS Stewardship Committee that oversees my work), Rev. Henry Wildeboer, preached a sermon on this text that he entitled: "Quit making God's arms tired." I love that title because it says so much about myself and all of us as Christians.

God says: "Try me out, take initiatives, step out in faith, do things in my name, dedicate your firstfruits, dedicate your tithes (the tenth that the Bible teaches) – and then don't be surprised with the blessings that come your way!" Yet, we are often so reticent to really step out as if we think God must get tired? We hesitate. We feel we can't afford it, we haven't got the money, the time, the talent or the training!

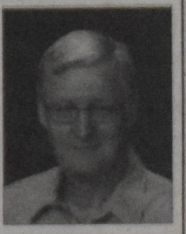
Here's where I think that overly zealous stewards might try and hide behind their stewardship and excuse themselves from taking initiatives that may stretch beyond what seems practical. For example, there might not have been a "Sea to Sea" bike tour if the decision were based on practical stewardship grounds alone.

I'm not saying we should be careless and cast our stewardship aside, but I do think that we need to be visionary stewards. Being a visionary steward requires one to have a goal, a future, a better situation in mind to strive for, and that may require that 1+1=3 or more. God controls the floodgates. Trust him. He can, and will provide by opening the floodgates!

Stewardly Tip: A New Year's resolution. Resolve this year to find a moment in every day where you can take some time to dig into God's word and pray. God can use that moment to crack open the floodgates for you. His hand is on the control, but it takes you to give God a reason to open it up!

Readers: Share your Stewardly Tips so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestion and your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask for more details.

Next issue: Wealth: Shackle or Lever?



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Television

When TV gets the morality right

CSI Miami & the issue of 'when is a baby a baby?'

Peter C. Glover

I am a big fan of the series CSI Miami.[1] The concept behind CSI is that, in the case of more heinous crimes such as homicide, it is less the detecting abilities of the old-style 'gumshoe' and more the hard-nosed forensic work of the police science laboratory which solves the crime in the 21st century. Filmed using the latest computer graphic techniques, it aims to reveal, in occasionally harrowing yet compelling clarity, something of the effect of bullets, chemicals and explosions on the human body and other objects. It is little wonder that the series has regularly found itself in the top ten viewing lists for the last couple of years, with the occasional TV Emmy Award thrown in.

Another thing that is impressive about this fifty-minute modern take on detectives with science degrees is its propensity to deal with difficult issues, including the failures of the justice system itself. Even with the aid of the incredible strides made by modern forensic science, the occasional known perpetrator cannot be prevented from 'walking' (hardly the happy-ending syndrome favored by the Hollywood film machine). But it is in the minutiae of the storylines and the relentless pursuit of objective, forensic truth that, just occasionally, we glimpse a little more depth than is found in the average cop thriller.

God in the works? One of the attractions of this science-based program is the regular insight we receive into the laws of forensic science – laws which bear (and they will, won't they) the hallmark of design by a higher power; a power which can mitigate even the grossest evil and secret designs of human 'wisdom'.

Take, for instance, the episode where our hero awaits outside a grand suburban house as his friend and bomb-squad officer colleague defuses a necklace bomb.[2] In fact the real target in this episode turns out not to be the 'necklace' victim per se, but rather the bomb-defusing team itself. When the worst happens and the bomb explodes, killing both the bomb disposal officer and the necklace victim, we witness, in slow motion, the spectacular impact as the front windows of the house shatter and blow out.

But it is as part of the ensuing investigation that we learn an interesting and important fact about bomb explosions – the preferred weapon of the modern urban terrorist. As a member of the investigation team explains to a colleague, bomb explosions have two phases. The first carries much of the bomb material, and other objects surrounding it, away from the vicinity of the detonation. This causes a vacuum to develop at the seat of the explosion, setting up a second phase which draws much of the debris back into the original detonation area. This is very important, as it means that what would otherwise be a massive crime scene area, with its essential clues which can aid in discovering the all important 'signature' of the bombmaker, is thus vastly reduced, aiding the subsequent investigation enormously. As this was being explained, the slow motion re-run graphically illustrated its truth by focusing on an unfortunate domestic bird (no doubt a fake) which is first hurled through the window only to be sucked back through it again in phase two.

What came home is how the natural laws often operate pro-actively to aid those pursuing truth and justice in identifying those responsible for crime. Even the cleverest of bombmakers, it seems, are now forced to run the gamut not only of state of the art detection techniques, but also our greater understanding of the laws of nature, laws by which all of us are governed. As a Christian, it is hard not to detect something of the hand of God in this small example of the two-phase explosion process which ultimately enables justice to prevail. Good may yet come out of even the very basest of murderous evil.

In many of the CSI shows, but especially the Miami version, there have been many key moments which suggest a moralism to the show, especially in the lead character, Lt Horatio Cain (played by the excellent David Caruso), who is driven by an overweening sense of truth and justice to get to the heart of the matter, no matter what. Now I do not for one minute suggest (as I simply do not know) that the producers and writers of CSI Miami are specifically setting out to make, subliminally or otherwise, powerful moral points. What I do think is that whenever objective truth and logic are employed and pursued, as here through real (not popular) science, to their natural conclusion, moral godly truths have a 'nasty' habit of revealing themselves. Let me give a prime example of what I mean by reviewing briefly another CSI Miami episode, one where its scripted assertions and observations concerning abortion, ran counter to the prevailing, liberal-dominated, attitudes of modern TV culture.

Is it a baby, or is it a fetus? In the first season's episode 'Ashes to Ashes', we learn that a wealthy man has brutally murdered his unconscious pregnant girlfriend by driving her car into the river, causing her to drown. Later we discover that the sick and cynical motive for the murder was simply that his girlfriend's pregnancy would have 'cramped his lifestyle'.

That the leading CSI, Horatio Cain, is visually upset by the death not only of the mother but of the unborn child, is quickly established. That he is equally determined to employ all the forensic evidence he needs to 'get this man', also becomes apparent. What is particularly moving is Cain's compassionate pursuit of justice, not only on behalf of the murdered adult, but on behalf of a murdered seven-week-old child. Think about it for a moment, only seven weeks old. In the parlance of today's pro-abortion world, seven weeks barely registers as a child at all. That the program had no compunction about treating the death of such a young 'unborn' in the womb as of equal concern with the death of the mother, and refusing to adopt the contemporary ruse of using the less emotive word fetus[3] for 'baby', is novel on prime-time TV. It would have been just as easy for the writer or producer to make the pregnancy a lot more advanced, creating perhaps an even greater sense of melodrama at the loss. But who in today's mass media, with its blatantly liberal ethos, considers a seven-week-old as a baby? The fact that it did give the baby the respect for its human status which it deserved, spoke volumes about how the mass media almost always fails to accord the unborn its true status, and gave a powerful, perhaps unwitting, message to any 'pro-choice', in reality, 'pro-abortionists', watching.

After all, who today would be bothered concerning the loss of a seven-week-old 'undeveloped' fetus? Given Western society's propensity to treat young life in the womb as having almost no human rights, as the 'pro-choice'[4] brigade do, even up to the age of 24 weeks, this was a refreshing change indeed. But the reality of the pain attached to all early human death, even death at seven weeks, was about to be crystallized when Cain requests that the dead fetal tissue (the body) be removed from the mother's corpse. The pathologist, acceding to the request, notes that performing this activity was one of the most distressing she ever had to do.

Next, the pathologist having complied with his request, we see Cain in his laboratory viewing the now deceased seven-week-old under the microscope – and we are allowed to see for ourselves the very formed, even at seven weeks, dead baby. Visibly moved to the edge of tears by what he sees, Cain has to leave the room to compose himself. It is only later that we realize his true purpose in all this. When the forensic and other evidence prove to be insufficient to charge or prove the guilt of the perpetrator, the killer and his lawyer arrogantly make to leave police custody. But Cain stands in front of him and holds up to his face a picture. It is a composite picture of a little girl – a mock-up prepared by laboratory colleagues. 'This', says Cain slowly and very deliberately, 'is your daughter as she would have looked on her second birthday had you not killed her and her mother'. Now Cain's action did nothing to prevent the killer from 'walking'. But what it achieved, and very dramatically, is the reality of what it means to murder an unborn child in a singular and powerful screen moment. It portrayed the truth that a seven-week-old fetus is indeed a baby, a human child. Just as Cain himself perceptively and gently observed as the dead fetal tissue was earlier being removed: 'Not just skin cells, is it?' No indeed, it is not.[5]

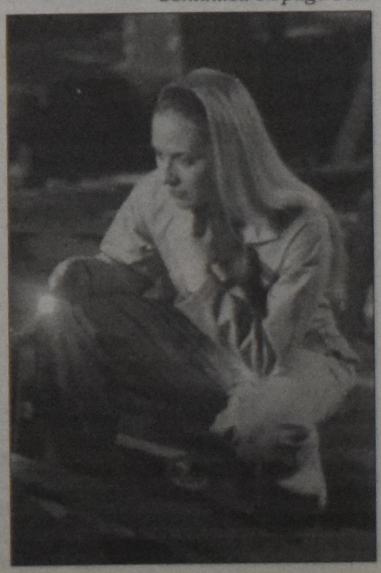
I have no reason to believe that the program makers were set on making a specifically anti-abortion case here, but it was as good and clear and dramatic an instance in support of the anti-abortion case, as I have witnessed on prime-time TV in a long time. In the world of the liberal-minded, amoral, often immoral, culture of entertainment-dominated mainstream TV, when the medium does occasionally get the God-given morality right, it can yet make for powerful broadcasting – and Christians should be gracious enough to say so.

And when it comes to the much more important issue of abortion generally, though there are some difficult issues involved on occasions, each one of us needs to know that God has already spoken on the matter thus:

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you.
Jeremiah 1:5

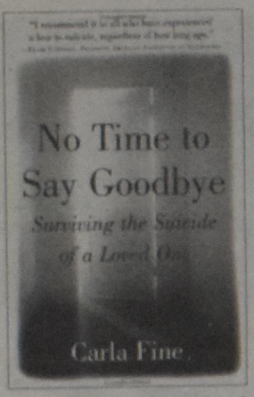
In the modern, often vacuous, debate over the issue of when a child becomes a child, God has made the matter very clear. It is illogical and odd, is it not, how some people will one moment happily treat the baby in the womb, right from conception, lovingly as 'the

Continued on page 14...



Review/Tribute

No time to say goodbye



No Time to Say Goodbye: Surviving the Suicide of a Loved One
Carla Fine
(New York: Doubleday, 1997)

Reviewed by
Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

When Carla Fine's husband, a young physician, took his own life in December 1989, Fine began an excruciatingly painful journey that was not of her own choosing. Thrust into the unwanted role of a survivor of suicide, she initially hid the cause of her husband's death from all but her immediate family and some close friends. Claiming that he had died of a heart attack, she tried to protect herself from the stigma attached to suicide. But even when others weren't aware of what her husband had done to himself, she was – in her thoughts constantly reliving the horror of discovering his body in his medical office.

Finally acknowledging that she needed help, Fine reluctantly joined a support group. About this group, she writes, "We were survivors of a shipwreck, consumed by guilt for having failed to save the dearest people in our lives and ashamed at being alive and abandoned. We were dazed by our helplessness, confused by the anger that laced through our mourning" (p. 4).

Besides joining the support group, Fine began searching for information on the topic of suicide. Though much literature existed – articles analysing why people committed suicide, texts on suicide prevention, and essays on the moral implications of suicide – Fine discovered nothing that defined her experience and that of other survivors of suicide. She writes, "Those of us who were left behind seemed forgotten" (p. 14).

Fine decided to change that, and interviewed more than 100 men and women. Based on those conversations, she brings the pain of suicide survivors into the light of day. By allowing them to tell their own stories, she hopes that "we will come to realize that we are neither crazy nor alone" (p. 14).

Fine relates the conclusion of the American Psychiatric Association that "the level of stress resulting from the suicide of a loved one is ranked as catastrophic – equivalent to that of a concentration camp experience" (p. 36) . She adds that suicide survivors who discover their loved ones' bodies are scarred for life. Many of the elderly people she interviewed who had gone through this experience in their childhoods said they remembered it as clearly as if it had just happened. Yet despite the long-term effects of suicide, Fine offers hope to survivors and shows how they can carry on with their lives.

One way she suggests is to join other survivors in a support group. Though she admits that it's not easy to open up and share with strangers, she stresses that the guilt, isolation, shame, questions, and stigma that are part of the experience can only be overcome by sharing stories with those who understand.

Fine also learned that in order to move forward with her life she had to, in her thinking, separate her husband's life from her husband's death. Initially, because of the guilt she experienced and the vivid image of her dead husband, she could no longer remember anything good about him. However, she eventually began to experience healing when she defined her husband's life "by how he lived it – not by how he left it" (p. 47).

Perhaps most difficult for survivors of suicide is the issue of blame. Either they blame themselves for not keeping their loved ones alive – Fine says, "We are often our own severest judges" (p. 80) – or others blame them for it. In order to lay the issue of blame to rest, Fine relates, "I had to accept that, ultimately, it was Harry's own choice to kill himself. All I can do is disagree with his decision" (p. 89).

Accompanying the problem of blame is the issue of the haunting what-if questions. What if I had done something differently? What if I hadn't said what I said? Even when suicide survivors have done all in their power to keep their loved ones alive, the what-if questions haunt them. Yet, many gradually come to the conclusion expressed by a suicide support group leader: "A suicidal person is like a black hole of pain. You can give and give but you just can't fill it up" (p. 131). Only when Fine, herself, began to accept the idea that "my husband's choice to kill himself was his alone did the powerful grip of the what-ifs of his suicide begin to loosen" (p. 91).

While constantly grappling with "the ultimate philosophical question of what makes some people want to live and others choose to die' (p. 105), Fine and other suicide survivors had to deal with the fallout of their loved ones' decisions: facing legal and financial issues, coping with negative attitudes of clergy, being avoided by friends and family, battling with the fear of also giving in to suicidal despair, and struggling with an exhausting roller coaster of emotions.

The effectiveness of Fine's book resides in its storytelling nature. Using only a few statistics – which can easily impersonalize suicide – she and other survivors speak from their hearts. By reading *No Time to Say Goodbye* this reader gained a deeper understanding and compassion for suicide survivors.

A tribute to "Hiltje"

Intangible Things
Heidi VanderSlikke

I met Hilda for the first time a few years ago at *God Uses Ink*. As I stood beside Hugh Cook she approached us with a big smile on her face. I fully expected her to ask Hugh for his autograph. To my surprise she looked at me and said, "I know who you are. I read your column every month." How could I not love her?

Her blue eyes sparkled as she told me of her recently completed book, a collection of memoirs written for a friend. I was captivated by this energetic little senior citizen, with her neatly styled, snow-white hair and radiant personality.

From time to time she would e-mail me, especially if a column particularly appealed to her. When I wrote poignantly about my mother, Hilda sent her love and encouragement. If I wrote humor, she laughed along with me, often telling me a funny story of her own. I marveled at her wit and wisdom, not to mention her zest for living.

When I wrote about being married to Jack for twenty-five years, she sent her congratulations in a message nearly as colorful as she was. She told me she had been deeply in love with her husband, and how after the first snowfall every year she visited his grave and stamped out a heart shaped path in the snow with her footprints.

Every time I saw her name on my in-box I smiled. I even kept a special file for e-mails from Hilda. We lived too far apart to visit, so the only time we came face to face was at the GUI conferences.

This was a woman who knew how to make people laugh. I remember the time our conference keynote speaker, Mark Buchanan, said he often wondered if anyone actually listened when he spoke. He had the whole session in stitches as he scratched his bald head and told us of being assured by a lady named Hilda that she "always pays attention when a handsome man talks."

I think the only thing we ever disagreed on was the weather. I'm a summer person and Hilda loved winter best of all the seasons. She especially enjoyed downhill skiing. It was on the slopes that she first noticed an uncomfortable tightness in her chest. A few months later the doctor informed her it was cancer. Two different kinds of cancer, matter of fact. And so her struggle began. She told me she was totally at peace with God's will for her, whether he decided to call her home soon, or let her stay here awhile longer. Her tears flowed, she said, not for herself, but for the ones she would leave behind.

The cancer and treatments took their toll. Her condition worsened. She confided that her eyes had lost their luster, and her smile was only there for the sake of others. Still, she found great comfort in God's word. Psalm 20 came alive for her when a young pastor visited and read, "May the Lord answer you when you are in distress." She claimed the Psalm as her own and read it often after that.

Her happy life had become a daily battle against weakness and fatigue, but true to form she wrote, "Heidi, I want to live until I die."

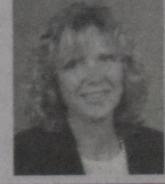
One night as she got ready for bed she looked out the window at the gently falling snow. Instead of her PJ's she pulled on her warmest clothing and went outside for a midnight stroll. She savored every snowflake that touched her face, and later wrote of the joy of walking along with God as her companion, through the "reverent hush that fell over the sleeping world."

In October I received one final e-mail with Hilda's name on it. It was from her son, informing those of us on her contact list that Hilda had passed away. I tucked it into my "Hilda" file, sadly knowing that it would be the last installment to my collection of messages from this delightful lady.

This afternoon I gazed idly at the bleak December horizon, remembering some significant moments from the year gone by. Watching the snow blow across the yard, I thought of Hilda and her love for winter. I considered the year ahead, and to be honest, I felt just plain weary. Jack brought in today's mail. Leafing through the latest *Christian Courier* I spotted Hilda's beautiful face smiling at me from the classified section. I wasn't surprised to see the text included in her obituary, "Rejoice in the LORD always." That is how she lived.

I remembered her resolve to live life to the full, and decided to make that my own resolution for 2006. We occasionally read of people who bounce back from a deathly illness or walk away from a terrible car crash. We think they must have been spared for some glorious purpose. Clearly God has some special reason for giving them another day. But as I think of Hilda's creed I realize we should view every day of life as divinely appointed.

I never knew Hilda well enough to discover her faults. She would be okay with that. She was always ready to graciously accept a compliment. I can honestly say I am richer for having known her. I'm even willing to entertain the possibility that there may be snow in heaven. And I think it's a worthy goal to emulate her *joie de vivre*, and honor the God we both love, by living until I die.



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Ecclesiastes

Is God not good?

A.A. van Ruler

I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on men: God gives a man wealth, possessions and honor, so that he lacks nothing his heart desires, but God does not enable him to enjoy them, and a stranger enjoys them instead. This is meaningless, a grievous evil.

Ecclesiastes 6:1,2

Another thought is added to the series of reflections demonstrating the futility of wealth. Here the Preacher sounds a deep, powerful note. He mentions not only the futility of the matter but also points out that it causes suffering and that it is a grievous evil. It weighs heavily on men and it is surprisingly common.

The matter is very simply stated. Here we have someone who is blessed with wealth, possessions and honor. He has achieved a great deal in his life. He is rolling in the dough. There is nothing in this world that he cannot have. Except, he is unable to enjoy them.

The writer does not explain why not. But we can think of many reasons. He might be suffering from some chronic illness, or perhaps he suffers from depression. Or perhaps he is one of those who is always after more so that he is unable to enjoy what he has. Maybe he is forced to leave all his possessions behind because he is about to die.

Whatever the case, he has much, but it does him no good whatsoever. Instead, others benefit from his wealth. Nothing is said about how those others have acquired his wealth. But once again it's easy to come up with possibilities. The others might, for example, be employees, servants, merchants, investors, friends, freeloaders, blackmailers, or heirs.

The Preachers describes the situation in surprisingly strong language. As he puts it, this makes life meaningless; it is a grievous evil.

But why? Wouldn't it be better if he were altruistic and told himself that at least someone else is able to enjoy it all? Perhaps he cannot enjoy it himself, but couldn't the fact that others are able enjoy his great wealth give meaning to his existence?

The Preacher doesn't even for a moment consider this source of comfort. It is not that he would deny that our neighbor, our fellow human beings, are a deep mystery and possess great worth. Our relationship to our neighbor does undoubtedly hold a great deal of life's meaning.

In fact, he might go a step further. For not only our neighbor is important to being authentic human beings but so is society. Each of us must also see ourselves as but a small part of a larger whole. And I'm not just thinking of society in the spatial sense but also in the temporal sense. We are children of those who preceded us and the parents of the next generation. And we must be responsible to both. We must wish to be nothing more than a part of the whole.

So as human beings we participate in three relationships – to our neighbor, to society and to the historical process. The Preacher would not deny this, but then he would add: there is also the indissoluble fact of your selfhood. The human self in its individuality and solitude is no less real. The self cannot be passed over for the sake of the neighbor, society or history.

The world only becomes meaningful when each and every human being can enjoy what he has. This is why the inability to enjoy what one has is such a grievous evil. There are so many whose lives are never complete, who never come full circle. They remain stuck halfway. It's not that they want to have or to be the same as everyone else. Nor do they want to have it all or to be at the top. All they want is to achieve a certain completion and satisfaction in what they actually are and do have! But that is precisely what eludes them.

There are simply an awful lot of people whose lives are broken in half. God gives them a great deal, but he does not allow them to enjoy it.

Putting it this radical way enables us to see what a deeply puzzling and perplexing matter this is. Sometimes God gives people a great deal but does not allow them to enjoy it. Is this arbitrary of God? Is it maliciousness on his part? Is God tormenting us or playing with us?

We must ask such bitter and perhaps sacrilegious questions to get to the bottom of the matter. We must think through the questions posed by human existence to their ground in God and relate them to him. Only then do we begin to see how truly puzzling they are. If we do not think these questions through to God, we have not yet thought them completely through. Then we're just toying with them. Not until we have given them a theological depth are we getting down to the foundations.

God isn't simply the answer to our questions; he is the actual question in our questions. Not until things begin to clash in our minds with the nature of God do they become fully problematic, contradictory, puzzling.

To live and think out of faith is therefore not an easy way to resolve all questions, but it is the only way to pose them seriously. No one suffers as deeply as the person who believes in God.

Perhaps by following this course it will become clear why the Preacher uses such strong language. He speaks of a grievous evil that weighs heavily on us because, on the one hand, we cling to the goodness of God, and, on the other, because we cling to the identity of the human self. The situation he describes offends against both.

Albrecht Durer. **Melencolia**, *1514. Engraving.*

Is God good if he gives us much but does not allow us to enjoy it? Whatever the answer, it breaks those who suffer from it in half.

The Preacher does not give a solution. He leaves us with the problem. All he does is to say this is what I see happening again and again in human life; this is what I see under the sun, and it is an evil that weighs heavily on men. It causes much suffering.

Let's not try to rise above this problem in a glib and pious way. We must acknowledge and bear this suffering, this evil.

The only thing that we can do in the spirit of the Preacher is to hope and to believe that one day it will be different. The only thing that can keep us going when we see reality in relation to God is eschatological expectation – to look ahead to the total redemption of the whole world in the Kingdom of everlasting glory.

When TV... *continued from page 12*

baby'; and how, the moment it is unwelcome or in some way burdensome, it reverts, inexplicably, to becoming 'a fetus' and something to be disposed of at the earliest opportunity? A perverse people, are we not; a people who do indeed have a natural propensity to suppress the truth of God (Romans 1: 18); that 'professing to be wise, they became fools' (v.21)? But such is the mindset of the uninformed, the uncaring and the self-serving.

NOTES

1 CSI – Crime Scene Investigator. CSI Miami *is a spin-off from the original CSI series set in Las Vegas. For me, the balance of scientific logic and the high premium placed on 'truth', mixed with occasional bouts of a genuine compassion expressed through the lead character, Horatio Cain, is where the Miami version scores over the original. At the time of writing,* CSI New York *is yet to get under way.*

2 A bomb placed around an individual's neck that can explode with the merest sudden movement (a device favored by some terrorists).

3 Fetus is merely the Latin word for 'baby'.

4 It is a constant practice among those of a liberal mindset to obscure the truth of the matter by devising more socially 'acceptable' language. Thus 'pro-choice' (which is meaningless) is preferred to the more controversial 'pro-abortion' (which is more appropriate). We should not let them get away with this practice.

5 The duplicity of much liberal thinking never fails to amaze me. The same liberal couple who are excited at the prospect of an impending birth, get excited referring to the unborn as 'the baby', even as 'little Joe' or 'little Beth', can just as easily, given it is an 'inconvenient' pregnancy, instead describe the unborn in the wife's womb as 'the fetus', denying that it is yet a baby at all!

Peter Glover is a former national spokesman for the Director of Public Prosecutions Office & Crown Prosecution Service, freelance writer on social, cultural and church affairs & author of The Politics of Faith: Essays on the morality of key current issues *and other books.*

Christian living

God's providence, God's peace

Berta Hosmar

That time of the year is just behind us when you couldn't go to a shopping mall without hearing Christmas carols all around you. After the tsunami of December, 2004, the unrest and bloodshed in the Middle East, and the hurricanes, mud slides and earthquakes of 2005, we seemed to want to shake off the gloom of the painful newscasts; we wanted to go on with our lives and try to have some old-fashioned Christmas fun.

To talk about peace on earth during the Christmas season this year was almost ironic, if by peace we mean absence of war.

Yet, in our family during this past year we have experienced a different kind of peace, and it has left us with a sense of wonder and awe.

It all started during the month of December, 2004. My husband Albert, who had enjoyed excellent health for many years, came home one day with symptoms of the flu. He felt tired, had a slight headache and slept a lot during the following days. He ate well, which left me feeling puzzled, but after a few days, when he did not improve and started to get sleepier, I called my daughter.

She said, "Mom, take him to the doctor, dad is not so young anymore, maybe some kind of a flu bug is bothering him." I protested that you can't run to a doctor for every little thing, but she insisted, so I obeyed her and persuaded Albert to come to the doctor with me.

After he was examined, I had a chance to talk to the doctor in private and told him that my husband also seemed to be a bit confused. The doctor, who had already dismissed him with a clean bill of health, took note, and asked Albert to name three different objects, then name them again, which Albert could not do. The doctor came to the conclusion that my husband had suffered a slight stroke, made an appointment with a neurologist, and sent us home.

It was December 17, the birthday of one of our sons, who lives in Ottawa with his family. We had intended to call him at night to congratulate him, but after our doctor's visit I decided to call him right away on his cell phone and tell him about his dad.

"Mom, you don't want him home when he has had a stroke. Dad belongs in the hospital," urged our son. And again I said, "I can't really be wiser than our doctor. Dad has an appointment with a neurologist in two weeks."

"Mom, don't be stubborn, just call the doctor again and don't take "No" for an answer. Tell him you are taking Dad to the hospital right now," ordered our son.

And again I obeyed one of my children and made the phone call. I don't think that the doctor at that point was too pleased about my insistence, but he said to ask for a CT scan, and half an hour later we were sitting in the emergency room of the Oshawa hospital.

I made a few phone calls, and our two sons and daughter with her husband and a grandson joined us in the waiting room.

I needed a little reassurance, for Albert had started to act more strangely by the hour. He smiled a bit and seemed comfortable in his wheelchair, for by now he had lost his balance, but his talking made no sense at all.

"Dad's in La-La Land," said one of our sons irreverently, trying to hide his fear.

Finally, after hours of waiting, a CT scan was taken of Albert's brain, and a little later a doctor joined us.

"I have good news and bad news," he said. "Did you recently have a fall, Mr. Hosmar?"

My husband understood the question, but could not remember anything at this point. But I told the doctor that four weeks earlier he had fainted after coming down with the flu and had fallen on the floor. He could have hit his head then.

"Well, the good news is that you did not have a stroke and that he doesn't have a brain tumor, but you have a bilateral subdural hematoma." In layman's language that meant that he had blood between the skull and the membrane of the brain.

"He has to have emergency surgery, and we will get you to Sunnybrook hospital as soon as we can arrange it," the doctor told us.

That's when a small miracle happened. When I heard the diagnosis, I was not overcome by fear, although by nature I am a real worrier. Instead, I felt a strange peace come over me. I could even smile at my grandson, who, at age nine, tried to comfort his grandfather by saying, "Opa, when I had my operation at Sick Kids hospital, all I felt was something on my face, and then opa … you just take it from there, you don't feel a thing".

Albert was taken to Sunnybrook hospital by ambulance the next day, and the surgery was performed a day later, for there was no opening in the operating rooms when he arrived. It was a Sunday morning. Our four children and their families go to various CRC churches and asked for prayers. Our own church joined in, and a Roman Catholic neighbor even asked her priest to pray for us.

Later a friend said jokingly, "Albert, you must be pretty important to get so many people in six different churches on their knees!"

Before the surgery, after a brief time of anxiety, I again felt peaceful and even dozed off at times. We were told by an intern what the consequences could be: that the surgery itself was not very complicated, the blood simply had to be drained, but that because of the very large size of the hematoma there was a possibility that the surgery might have to be repeated.

The change in Albert after the operation was remarkable. He went into surgery totally relaxed, for he was almost in a zombie-like state; yet, a few hours later he was sitting up in bed, joking and seemed to be his old self again.

That's when we started to speak about providence. If our daughter had not urged me to take her Dad to the doctor that very same morning, if our son had not just that day celebrated his birthday, the reason for me to call him that day, if that same son, who had arrived from Ottawa in the meantime, had not ordered me to go to the hospital right away, his Dad could have died. The doctor said that there had been a very real danger that the membrane would have collapsed, because of the size of the hematoma.

A neighbor came for a visit a week later and we told him the story. "Those coincidences happen more often," said the neighbour."You were just lucky, Albert."

We told him we knew it was God's providence – he had used our son and daughter .

All went well for about four weeks, although the neurologist had urged me to keep a very close watch on my husband and make sure the symptoms did not recur, since they had not been able to get all the blood drained.

At times I drove Albert slightly nuts with my fussing, but sure enough, after about a month, he tried to pay a few bills but experienced some difficulty writing the checks.

He was not confused or sleepy and did not talk nonsense, so I did not know what to do, but again, some thirty minutes later our daughter called, totally unexpectedly.

She talked to Albert and asked, "Dad, do you have difficulty answering my questions?"

He admitted that he had."I can't find the right words," he confessed.

Twenty minutes later we were on our way to Sunnybrook again, and more surgery followed the next morning. Again the panicky feeling left me and that same peace came over me, also when we were told after this surgery, that if things happened again in a few weeks, more extensive and riskier surgery would have to be done, and that the CT scan, taken after this operation, was not satisfactory.

What brain surgery can do to a person, we have seen in our immediate family. A sister had a brain tumor removed six years ago, but she became severely disabled after the surgery. During the following days we were both at peace, but I often prayed, "Lord, please don't let me worry about the future; please block these scary thoughts from our minds".

A CT scan, taken a few weeks later, showed that much of the remaining blood had dissipated, and gradually my husband improved. It has been more than ten months now, and, except for a few minor side effects, things are just about back to normal.

But it's good to reflect and to remember that indeed God does give peace when needed and that he looked after us even in the smallest details. Many people don't get the answers to their prayers the way we did, and that makes us all the more thankful.

During this past Christmas season we remembered that, indeed, during our time of need, we experienced peace in our hearts.

Angel with Daniel's friends

Ministry

Holistic thinking for maritime ministry

Jason Zuidema

In the first part of his speech, Zuidema pointed out that different traditions approach the ministry to seafarers in quite different ways. Some emphasize a diaconal ministry and other evangelism. Some focus on meeting physical and social needs and others on a literature ministry, distributing tracts and Bibles. Both have their shortcomings.

Zuidema shows that they are part of a single ministry that must address the whole person. He turns to Q &A 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism to develop such a holistic view of the person and of ministry.

From it he draws three ideas. The first, discussed in part one of this speech, was (1) the lordship of Christ over soul and body: it means that besides physical, financial and recreational needs there are also emotional and spiritual needs that must be served.

In this concluding part, Zuidema draws out the meaning (2) of the providence of God in the smallest things of life, and (3) of the Holy Spirit for ministry to seafarers.

In the second place, the Heidelberg Catechism also points to the providence of God in the smallest things of life. This truth is vitally important for seafarer's lives are often so focused on these small things. Although in port very large and stable, ships, so seafarers tell me, feel nonetheless like toothpicks when caught in a storm in the middle of the Atlantic. Also, within the ship seafarers have to deal with all sorts of important data and technical equipment which if not properly handled could cause serious problems or injury. More than most jobs, seafarers have a consistent array of trials and tribulations, so they need to hear that God cares for and is present with 'toothpick-like' things in this world.

More than that, however, many seafarers feel the strain of being away from home for such a prolonged period of time. In a certain sense, the life of a seafarer is a very counter-cultural one: life on board ship differs in many ways from the lives of those who have stationary jobs – most noticeably in the area of the family relationships. Some officers can bring their wives and children, but the lesser-ranking seafarers have to go alone for many months at a time.

They develop ways of dealing emotionally being apart from their families for 10 months at a time, but it certainly can't be easy. When I am parted from my wife for several days, I already feel the strain when I return. When we don't share it together, life easily becomes compartmentalized. For example, last week I was gone from home for five days, and there were many things my wife did that I would have never known about had she not told me. Some things weren't very important, but sharing emotional and spiritual ups and downs is critical in a marriage. What my wife and I experienced after only five days would be greatly compounded if I were gone for nine months at a time.

Hence, chaplains have a necessary and often privileged place in the life of the seafarer. Although a poor substitute for a wife, chaplains can be a great emotional support for seafarers who really need to work through emotional problems. Our role as listening ears is crucial for their emotional well-being and happiness on board a ship for weeks and months at a time. Some no doubt have great relationships with their co-workers and can work out emotional problems among themselves, but others feel alone and rejected and would love to talk with another human being who is not trying to make them do something.

On a more practical level, more could be done to help link husbands and wives during these long months away. Telephones, letters, and email are all helping us greatly in our work. If you have other innovative ideas you have been implementing in your club to overcome this barrier, it could be a wonderful thing to contribute at a conference such as this.

Thirdly, the question and answer above point to the role of the Holy Spirit. I have already alluded to the importance of the seafarers' knowledge of God. It is vitally necessary, I believe, that the seafarer knows that God is not just the God of the land, but also that of the sea. He is no farther away on ship than on land, or even in a church. I am not arguing that we no longer need churches, but that the seafarer doesn't have to, indeed, shouldn't put his spiritual life on hold for nine months while on ship.

Whenever I held a prayer service at the seafarers centre in Montreal, I always preached the same short homily based on the Lord's Prayer. The point of my message, and this from Matthew's Gospel, was that prayers do not need to be long and complicated, but from the heart. Differentiating the self-glorifying prayer of the Pharisee and the from-the-heart prayer of the publican is what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount. So whenever they were subjected to stress or temptation, I told the seafarer to pray to God from the heart. I don't know if they listened to me, but encouragement to pray is one of the most important initial steps in meeting the spiritual needs of seafarers. Certainly many of the Christian seafarers needed encouragement in doing this. I had the impression that some of them took breaks from being Christian for the nine or ten months during which they were on board their ship. Fortunately, the Spirit of God does not take a vacation for the same period. The Seafarers should know that spiritual life goes on despite their forgetting it for a time.

I like to think that the three points brought to the fore by the first question and answer of the Heidelberg Catechism reflect the holistic thinking of Paul on being a 'living sacrifice':

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Romans 12:1-2 and 9-16

These verses 9-15 especially get to the heart of holistic ministry. Paul is certainly concerned not only with diaconal concerns (as important as they may be) but also with the emotional and spiritual concerns of the little people of this world. I imagine seafarers often qualify as those of low position. Perhaps even more directly this text encourages us to love the motorman as much as the captain. In any case, the truths drawn from the Reformed confession seem to have a root in this Scripture passage.

III. Practical Application

How then, practically, will we overcome the obstacles to ministering holistically to seafarers? How can we address the needs of the seafarers on all the levels that we mentioned? I came to this line of thinking based on my own experience with Seafarers ministry. I was uneasy about either simply meeting the physical or recreational needs of the seafarers or simply meeting their spiritual needs. Sometimes I would just give a seafarer a ride without comment or just give a Bible without comment.

Most of our Seaman's clubs have a privileged place in ports across the world. As you all know, for the last several years ports have greatly increased security. When I first arrived in Montreal, I could drive virtually anywhere in the Port at virtually any speed and get onto virtually any ship without too much identification. Often a name tag that said I was 'Jason' from the Seaman's club was enough. In the last seven years things have changed dramatically. Yet, even with the new security regulations, only very seldom are we forbidden access to the crews of the ships that come into the port. Seafarers have often told me that in other ports it is much more difficult for them to get shore leave. In certain parts of North Africa and Asia, the port is so dangerous they don't even want shore leave! So their relief is so much greater when they come to Montreal and are greeted by a smiling face and someone who can help them relax and stock up on what they need for the next trip.

My question is, what do we do with this privilege? Our ministry is not just to give rides or to be tour guides. These activities are important parts of the ministry and meet important needs, but there is more. To help get rid of the divide between just social or just spiritual work, I set for myself a goal to engage in meaningful conversation with the seafarer. Not just conversations about the weather (unless the weather is something important that day!), but meaningful conversations about subjects that mean something to him.

Ultimately, I hope that these conversations will lead to an opportunity to present by deed or word the presence and power of God. In this way I learn more about who they are and what exact needs they might have. Rather than just throw solutions at them for needs they might not have, it is necessary to talk with them about things that are important to them and encourage them to find solutions.

It is surprising how few meaningful conversations we have as chaplains in a single week. I encourage you to make a list of seafarers with whom you have had such conversations. Maybe you will be surprised by how few. When I say meaningful conversations, I don't mean that they have to be about predestination or transubtantiation – again, unless this is really important. Rather, I am suggesting topics that deeply affect the life of the seafarer. It is in these deep topics – such as family, marriage, career, conflicts at work or home, and certainly God – that one has the most emotional and spiritual reaction. As any wife will tell you, it is not good for men to keep all these emotions bottled up without talking about them. Who knows the number of marriages chaplains have saved by simply talking about and reminding seafarers of their families.

Perhaps some examples of this would be helpful.

Edward

Edward was a Filipino electrician on a large cruise ship. He was in the seafarer centre playing pool by himself, so I offered to join. He gladly accepted and soon we were engaged in a lively and interesting conversation. Recently in his village in the Philippines a tragic accident had occurred: a large barge carrying pilgrims had capsized and over 300 people had died. Edward told me how the local priest tried to explain God's actions in this tragedy. The priest was not entirely convincing in Edward's eyes. But before he could really ask his priest for a better explanation, he had to get back on the ship.

He had continued to think about this ques-

tion, so he posed it to me. Why did God allow this? How could this have happened? For the next two hours Edward and I talked about this and other questions. I admitted the difficulty of answering such important and delicate questions, but we considered some of the facts of Scripture concerning God's action to begin to find an answer. I was happy to have been given the chance to encourage a seafarer in thinking about a question that was obviously so important to him.

John

John was a Greek seafarer working on the deck of an ocean-going bulk carrier. Before joining his ship, he'd had a fight with his wife, and now she wouldn't come to speak with him on the phone. He would just talk to his children and communicate to his wife through them.

When I talked with him, he was ready to call his marriage quits. He had even recently stopped sending money home to his wife. One of his friends had even given him easy advice on how most quickly and easily he could get a divorce.

His English wasn't very good, but I tried to show him that he ought to wait and discuss things with his wife before making such a drastic decision. He didn't quite understand what I was trying to tell him. I don't know modern Greek, but I thought my rusty biblical Greek might help. I found a Greek New Testament and turned to the passage in Galatians on the fruit of the Spirit. In this list that I found the word "patience". When he saw the word in his own language, he understood.

He promised that he would try to be more patient with his wife, rather than forcing the 'easy, easy' (said with a thick Greek accent) solution of divorce. I thanked the Lord that I could be one little link in the process of keeping that marriage together; certainly at least his children deserved it for being stuck in the middle of their warring parents.

Himadri

Himadri was born near Calcutta, India and was a cadet when I first met him in the summer of 1998. Seeing as I was, at that time, a cadet of sorts at the Seafarers Center (or a 'baby priest' as the old Anglican chaplain used to call me), Himadri and I had something in common and hit it off well. For the next four or five trips he and I would always meet up and spend a night talking about all sorts of different things. It was sad then at the end of his contract to say goodbye.

Fortunately, we stayed in touch by e-mail.

Surprisingly he sent me periodic e-mails asking me all sorts of things about school and life. Once he wanted my opinion on love marriages. He had met a very nice girl from south India on an on-line dating service. It posed difficulties because it was he and not his parents who was setting up the marriage. Moreover, she was from a much lower caste and a completely different part of India. So he wanted to know everything there was to know about love marriages so as to make an informed decision in this difficult time. Over the next months we wrote back and forth about love and marriage. Actually, we have still stayed in touch periodically for all this time.

These, then, are the kinds of conversations that I sought while doing ministry among the seafarers. They tried to address deep needs in each of them as a person. What is important is that we take these conversations for what they are. Seeing that talking is one of our main occupations, we should be intentional in what we say. Rather than simply talking to fill up time, we must try to talk in order to meet the needs of the seafarer.

This might mean a change in your working schedule to allow more time to spend with the men, but it will be ultimately worth it. Remember you are not there primarily to build a seafarers center (and this is said as a warning to those here who in danger of being overwhelmed by the trap of administrative responsibilities), but to minister to seafarers.

Not only may meaningful conversations be helpful for your ministries, but they may also serve as one small way to begin to overcome our ecumenical problems. This method of approaching seafarers as whole people seems to be something all of us can do. Further, it is a way to work together in our common task. The "One task" of our variously expressed ministries needs to be directed at the whole person of the seafarer. I leave aside the question of exactly what physical, financial, recreational, emotional and spiritual needs the seafarers have, but simply encourage you to actively address each of them.

Rather than trying to throw solutions at individual problems in the life of the seafarer, consider that person's whole life and the comprehensive needs he might have. Although often forgotten or marginalized by the broader world, these needs must be met. This is indeed the "one task" we are called to.

I end with the words of Paul again from Romans 12, words which push us to holistic thinking for maritime missions:

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Our apologies that there was such a long hiatus between part 1 and part2 of this speech. I miscalculated about how much space holiday themes would take in the latest issues. Editor

An ounce of prevention: healthy pastors, healthy churches

Rachel Boehm Van Harmelen

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." This wise saying attributed to Benjamin Franklin is heard so frequently these days it seems like a cliché. Yet the appeal of this adage is easily understood. In all areas of life – from home repair to healthcare – prevention simply makes good sense. Why not put a little effort today into prevention if it means we can avoid big problems – and expensive cures – in the future?

When Christian Reformed Church (CRC) pastors gathered recently in Grand Rapids, Michigan, to share how their involvement in peer learning has contributed to their personal and professional effectiveness, the concept of prevention versus cure came up repeatedly. The pastors' experiences pointed to the truth of Franklin's proverb. Investing in the health of a pastor today may require some upfront time and effort – and some financial resources – but it's less costly than the cure.

Thanks to funding from the CRC's Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) project through Lilly Endowment Inc., CRC pastors can now access funds to start a peer learning group, nurturing their pastoral health through mutual support, networking, mentoring, and continuing education. In 2005, 22 groups received peer learning grants through the program, and – as their leaders attested at this recent gathering – these funds were an investment in prevention, one that will no doubt yield many positive returns in the future.

Rev. Harold Winters leads a peer learning group in Ontario's Niagara Peninsula. The group, which meets monthly, aims to deepen relationships between pastors in the region while exploring the concept of pastoral character through workshops, book discussions, a retreat, sharing and prayer. At one meeting, a psychologist met with Winter's group to share skills in maintaining appropriate boundaries, something that protects pastors, their families and the entire congregation.

Peer learning activities like these really do contribute to their effectiveness as pastors, explains Winters, but they also play a preventative role. "We are better able to serve, less likely to experience burnout and less likely to succumb to moral failure," says Winters. "One of my colleagues referred to our peer group meetings as a workout for his spirit. If we are spiritually fit, we're less liable to suffer spiritual injury."

Rev. Stan Workman, pastor of Oasis Community Church in Oakland, Florida, also understands the critical nature of prevention for pastors. His group was formed to provide mutual support, preventing the pastoral isolation that can lead to stress and burnout, and contribute to personal and family breakdown.

"Our group provided a safe environment where participants can truly share. The continuing reward has been strong mutual support and a genuine caring about each other and our ministries. The surprise has been to see how God has arranged each gathering time to be the exact time a member of the group has needed extra care, a listening ear, and genuine feedback."

When great distances separate pastors from their peers, as they do in the interior of British Columbia on Canada's west coast, the need to prevent isolation is even more crucial, says Rev. Andrew Vander Leek. Vander Leek is pastor of Vernon CRC in Vernon, B.C., where he leads a peer group called the Interior B.C. Pastor's Leadership Network. He says that while it may be difficult to measure the long-term impacts of a pastor's involvement in a peer learning group, it's hard to deny the correlation between healthy pastors and healthy churches.

"Because of the group, we don't feel alone in ministry," says Vander Leek. "We are growing in our knowledge and are better equipped for leadership. We are healthier leaders with a support network of other pastors who encourage us."

When asked if their groups will continue to meet once their funding from SPE has expired, most participants at the conference answered with a resounding "Yes!" Yet many admitted that lack of financial resources may require them to meet infrequently or to substantially downsize their activities. An alternative would be for churches to set aside some funds to ensure pastors involved in a peer group can continue to participate even after grant monies are phased out.

"How can I convince my congregation that funding my involvement in a peer learning group is important?" one pastor asked.

Perhaps the answer can be found in that famous Franklin quote. Churches can pay now and reap the many rewards of pastoral health and effectiveness; or, perhaps, pay later when a crisis erupts. When it comes down to a choice between an ounce of prevention or a pound of cure, the answer might become a little more obvious.

Opinion

From the 11th Province

Marian Van Til

A happy blessed New Year!

The thesaurus in the copy of WordPerfect that I use to write these pages contains both synonyms for, and definitions of, main entries. One of the definitions of ritual is: "A conventional social gesture or act without intrinsic purpose."

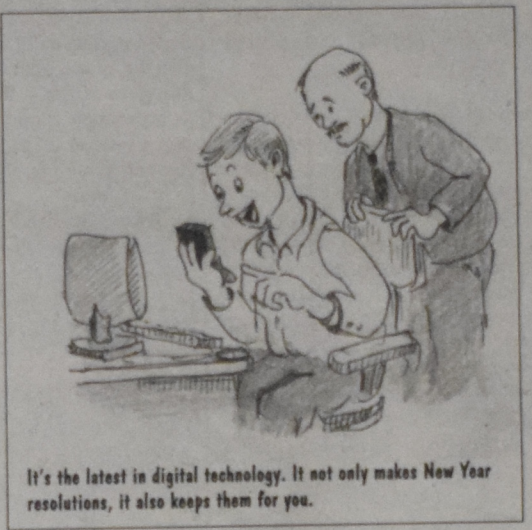
I've been thinking about the place of ritual in our lives because Christmas and New Year's is the time when we seem most inclined to ritual – personal, familial and liturgical. While as an organist I've been particularly involved in liturgical ritual, it's those "conventional social gestures or acts" that I'm especially thinking of. But the ones I have in mind are surely not "without intrinsic purpose." Most human societies have developed rituals (which become traditions) to mark the passage of one year to another, though of course not everyone does it on December 31/ January 1.

Whether each person or society worships the true God or not, every human being senses that periodic renewal is necessary, that the old – interior and exterior, private and public – must become new and beautiful and bright (again). It makes sense that we would mark a time of renewal as an old year passes and a new one begins. Among both Muslim and Hindus, the New Year is signified, among other things, by the wearing of new clothes; and Hindus also light thousands of lamps. Some southeast Asian groups release birds at the New Year (which fly away freely to begin new lives). The Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah, particularly includes self-examining introspection. (The Bible refers to Rosh Hashanah as Yom Ha-Zikkaron, the Day of Remembrance, or Yom Teruah, the Day of the Sounding of the Shofar; see Leviticus 23:23-24.) The 10 days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are talked of as "Days of Awe" because they are days of repentance. This is symbolized by Tashlikh ("casting off"), in which participants walk to a flowing water source (creek, river, waterfall) on the afternoon of the first day and empty their pockets into the water, figuratively casting off their sins. There is no biblical precedent for the practice, but it is by now an ancient custom.

It's surely no accident that modern-day Judaism, with its origins in true biblical religion, still emphasizes specific times of repentance, and especially as each new year commences. And it shouldn't really surprise us Christians who believe that we human beings are religious beings through-and-through that in virtually every culture New Year observances have religious roots. That in many places such religious roots are now obscured is also no big news. Being fallen creatures, despite our best intentions we repeatedly sink into bad habits, and worse ("The good that I would, I do not, and the evil that I would not, that I do," to quote the King James Bible quoting St. Paul). Whether everyone acknowledges the reason for the truth Paul states, no one would deny that we human beings fall into habits and attitudes that need correcting.

Sloth may be chief among those habits. Not that all of us are lazy; we Calvinists aren't generally known for that increasingly evident trait. But lack of vigilance and discipline can be slothful. It is oh-so-difficult to have the vigilance, perseverance and discipline to pray fervently, daily, that we will be delivered from whatever individual sins and spirit of sin we know we need delivering from. And then, when we do pray for that deliverance, to act accordingly, every~~~ more obediently – trusting that God will give us the strength to do so.

New Year's Eve, on the brink of a New Year seems an especially appropriate time to take stock, to repent; and then to renew, resolve, rectify, restore, with God's help. Note that all those words start is "re," meaning again. The sanctification road is life-long, and some miles along it looks suspiciously like those we've seen before and were hoping to avoid a second – or seventh or tenth – time around.



It's the latest in digital technology. It not only makes New Year resolutions, it also keeps them for you.

Annual well-meant resolutions aside, there doesn't seem to be much serious introspection or self-examining repentance in present-day secular North American New Year's Eve celebrations. Standing in New York City's Times Square waiting for the Irish-made crystal ball to drop, or at the Canadian edge of Niagara Falls waiting for the digital clock to "strike" 12 has its freezing charms (one of them being conversing cheerfully with complete strangers through one's tightly wound winter mufflers). On the other hand, no doubt many of us have also attended parties on that night which turned out to be raucous affairs at which others – or we ourselves – drank too much, ate too much, danced too often, said too much and stayed too late. And in the harsh winter light of New Year's Day we resolved (again) that there must be a better way to mark the passing of a year.

There is a better way, of course. One which allows us Christians to acknowledge that God had just given us yet another year of life and blessings – more than we could possibly ask or imagine. Our churches have gotten it right. They have long emphasized ending the year and beginning the new one with God, and the families within those churches (at least, most of them) have carried that spirit into their homes.

The Christian Reformed congregation in Highland, Indiana, in which I grew up had an evening New Year's Eve service. It was a fairly solemn affair, I recall, almost penitential in nature. (As I think of it now, that was quite appropriate, though I'm not sure everyone realized it.) Then there was another service the next morning, slightly more exuberant. (Those services are still marked in my mind by the hymns we sang – several of which were sung only on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day.

For the rest, my parents (and therefore we children) stayed home on New Year's Eve until we were old enough to gather with friends. Some CRC congregations still hold year's-end/year's-beginning services, while others have reduced the two to one (for the sake of convenience and lack of attendance, apparently). But many churches in other denominations have no such services at all, having admitted total defeat in the effort to Christianly mark the year's change. Some congregations, however (CRC and others) open their church doors on New Year's Eve and hold a happy, holy party for any and all who want to come. Other's shift that to an after-church New Year's coffee hour, usually accompanied by goodies leftover from family gatherings or parties the night before.

I recall my surprise and near awe the first time I encountered a Scripture-reading custom carried on by a family of Dutch Canadian immigrants on New Year's Eve, a profound ritual which was then carried over into a party I attended: the reading of Psalm 90 (a prayer of Moses) at a few minutes after midnight, after the "Happy New Year!"greetings and accompanying hugs and kisses had subsided. Some years later, when I married, my husband and I remarked on this tradition, and he and I have made it our own.

Psalm 90 acknowledges the absolute faithfulness of our eternal, omnipotent God, and confesses our own wispy fragility and our sheer, utter need for him: *Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God....* But at the end of the psalm, Moses prayed, and we still pray to his God and ours: *May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work or our hands for us – yes, establish the work of our hands.* What a bold prayer! Bold in the assumption that so great a God will hear and answer, and bless the work of our puny, unsubstantial hands. Is there any better way to start a New Year (again)? Any other way to ensure a happy – no, a blessed – New Year?

Another year of mercies, of faithfulness and grace;
Another year of gladness in the shining of Thy face;
Another year of progress, another year of praise,
Another year of proving thy presence all the days.
(Frances R. Havergal, 1874;
Psalter Hymnal #475, v. 2,
Centennial Edition, 1959)

Marian Van Til worked for Christian Courier *from 1984-2000, and preceded Harry der Nederlanden as its editor. She now lives in Youngstown, NY; she may be contacted via e-mail at <mvantil@adelphia.net>.*

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Deeper meanings for sabbath keeping

Tony Campolo

I grew up in a Jewish neighborhood and I knew that Orthodox Jews make a big thing out of observing the Sabbath. Having a day off from the hectic activities of everyday life for some fun and relaxation always seemed like a good idea to me, but in watching how seriously my Jewish friends took Sabbath keeping I knew there was more to it than that.

The commandment to keep the Sabbath, as most people know, is right up there near the top of the big ten. Of all the commandments, it is the one that is most reiterated and discussed in scripture. Furthermore, Jesus regarded the Sabbath as a special gift from God. He said, "The Sabbath was made for man; not man for the Sabbath."

Knowing there was a lot about Sabbath keeping that was missing, I asked a rabbi friend of mine to help me understand why this day was so important. The first thing I learned from him was that the Sabbath was a day to stop what we're doing and to reflect upon who we are in the eyes of God.

We have a tendency to see our significance in terms of what we do. We think that our doing is the essence of our being. We are a busy people and we deem our busy-ness a sign of our importance. But the Sabbath destroys such illusions. It is a day, the rabbi told me, when we stop the routines of everyday life and reflect upon who we are apart from our socially prescribed roles.

THE SABBATH REST *by Samuel Hirszenberg (1866-1908). Oil on canvas 1894.*

The Sabbath commandment is the only one that begins with the word "remember." It is a day when, apart from all we do, we call to mind that God loves us regardless of our accomplishments. Our busy-ness does not impress God as he instructs us to stop what we are doing and remember that there is nothing we can do that can get him to love us more; and that there is nothing we can do that can get him to love us less. On the Sabbath we remember that his love is unconditional.

Secondly, my rabbi friend told me that Sabbath keeping was a way for the people of God to differentiate themselves from those who embrace a consumerist lifestyle. In a world in which so many are wrapped up in earning money and believe that not a day should be set aside for anything else, Sabbath keeping reminds God's people that they are not to be like that. We are to trust God to meet our needs, and this should free us from constantly keeping our noses to the grindstone. Consequently, Sabbath keeping is a counter-cultural act that declares to a world marked by commercialism that our lives are more than just making money.

Thirdly, I was taught that the Sabbath is to be a day for expressing love for others. Martin Buber, the famous Hasidic philosopher, drove home this point with a story of a certain rabbi whose reputation for holiness was such that members of his synagogue jokingly said that after Sabbath services he ascended into heaven to commune with God. Some children, overhearing this, believed it to be true and decided to follow the rabbi on the next Sabbath to see what happened to him.

The following week the children watched as the rabbi left the synagogue. They followed him, and to their surprise they saw that he visited Gentile widows; cleaned their houses; and cooked meals for them.

When the elders of the synagogue heard what the children had done they asked, with tongues in cheek, "Well? Did our rabbi really ascend up to heaven?" They were taken back when the children answered, "Oh no! He went much higher than that!"

Lastly, I was told what I already knew – that the Sabbath was created for revitalization. We need physical and spiritual recuperation. Physical and psychological exhaustion makes us vulnerable to temptation and prone to sin.

Rest is essential for spirituality. I know that as a preacher there is a special dynamic to my sermons when I am rested.

Given all of these dimensions of Sabbath keeping, it is no wonder that we are commanded to carve out this special day each week, and to keep it holy.

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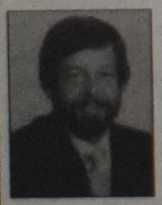

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February 2, 1916 December 4, 2005

MAARTJE TOL (nee **Vermeul**)

For God so loved the world
that he gave his only begotten Son,
that whosoever believes in him shall not perish,
but have everlasting life. John 3:16

Suddenly, the Lord called home our beloved Mother, Oma and great-Oma.
Predeceased by her husband of 63 years, John Tol in 2003 and an infant daughter in 1944.

Loving mother of:
Corrie (John) Van der Woude, *New Westminster, B.C.*
Tony (Ina) Tol, *Bovenkarspel, the Netherlands*
Hans (Betty) Tol, *Kaleden, B.C.*
Paula (Klaas) Jansma, *Victoria, B.C.*
Mary (Hans) Bomhof, *Victoria, B.C.*

Loving Oma of
22 grandchildren &
31 great-grandchildren, the last one born on the day of the funeral.

Contact address: C. Van der Woude
109 College Court
New Westminster BC V3L 1K8

Obituaries

February 10, 1904 **IDA JOHANNE DEJONG** (**Penning**) December 8, 2005

Peacefully at her residence with some family members by her side, Ida has gone to be with her LORD.

Thank you Mom, Grandma, and Great-grandma for your unique model of Christian love, faithfulness, kindness and generosity.
We loved you and we are so grateful for your love, prayers and interests in our lives and especially of our spiritual destiny.

Your children:
Tena & John Geerts
Jake & Hazel DeJong
Marguerite (Peter †2004) DeVries
Helen & John Cappon
Wynne & Gerald Vandezande
(Jessie †1997) Tom Posthumus/Sally Green
Betty & Peter Mostert
Mary & Sy Wassenaar
(Allan †1992) Elaine DeJong
Willa & Henry Westendorp
Ida & Henry Lunshof
Nancy & Gerrit De Boer
Lillian (John †1999) Buesink
67 grandchildren (2 deceased)
60 great-grandchildren (1 deceased)

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.
So we fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen.
For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:17-18

HILDA BOEKEE (nee **De Haan**)

In her 78th year, went home to home to be with her LORD
on Thursday December 1, 2005 at Lakeridge Health Oshawa.
Beloved wife for 52 years of John Boekee.

Dear mother and Beppe of:
Ed & Cathy – Jeffery
Cor & Rosaline – Jonathon, Steven, Michael, Kristen
Art & Jeanette – Heather, Janita, Scott, Kara, Nicole, Mark
Jake & Joyce – Karen, Jeremy, John, Rebecca, Rachel, Andrew, Steven
Martin & Bev – Daniel, Rachel, Kenneth
Fred & Caroline – Marie, Matthew, Christopher, Melissa, David, Michael, Susanna, Robert
Corinne & Jim Smedes – David, Nathan, Jessica, Jason

She is a sister to:

Ali & Johan* Veldboom	Jake & Connie DeHaan
Keimpe & Geertje* DeHaan	Lummie & Henk Hunse
Fred & Jane DeHaan	Annie & Luke Maat
Martha & Geert Vogelzang	(* = predeceased)

Mom will be sadly missed by many family and friends, but we do not grieve as those who have no hope, our hope and trust is in God who is our life and salvation.

PRAISE GOD FROM WHOM ALL BLESSINGS FLOW

Correspondence address: John Boekee, 3624 Concession Rd 4, Orono ON L0B 1M0

DUTCH SERVICE

January 15, 2006
in the
Ancaster Christian
Reformed Church
at 3:00 p.m.

Rev. W. Kroon will be preaching

The Back to God Hour curtails television ministry

Palos Heights, Ill. – The Christian Reformed Church announced Dec. 15 that it will no longer produce its award-winning weekly television program Primary Focus in order to direct resources into other areas of media ministry.

The decision was made by the Board of the Back to God Hour (BTGH), the electronic media ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, at its meeting on Dec. 12.

The BTGH Board announced that production of new Primary Focus programming will cease effective immediately. Programs already produced will continue to air as long as markets are available.

Rev. Robert Heerspink, the interim director of the Back to God Hour, said that although Primary Focus won many awards for quality and has been aired on a growing number of stations across the United States and Canada, it has been increasingly difficult to fund the program at the levels required for high-quality television production.

Heerspink noted that in recent years the Back to God Hour has shifted additional resources into international broadcasting initiatives because of great international response. In addition to English, the Back to God Hour has radio broadcasts around the globe in Arabic, Chinese, French, Indonesian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.

Heerspink said the Board's decision does not signal a retreat from media ministry in North America. The Back to God Hour is currently working on employing new web-based ministry outlets, including pod-casting and web-casting, as well as video programming.

He said the Back to God Hour also is continuing to explore partnerships and ministry opportunities that would open the way for new initiatives in North American and international English language broadcasting.

Job Opportunities

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Cambridge Christian School – Principal Position

Cambridge Christian School (CCS) is actively seeking applications for a full time administrator. CCS is located in one of the fastest growing and strongest economic areas in Canada. Next year, we anticipate the celebration of 40 years of Christian education in the community. Our experienced staff of 16, teach and disciple 189 students, from J.K. to grade 8. CCS serves an interdenominational community.

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Ms. Geri DeWeerd
gdeweerd@aic.com
cell: (905) 517-1344 fax: (519) 623-4042
c/o Cambridge Christian School
229 Myers Rd.,
Cambridge, ON N1R 7H3

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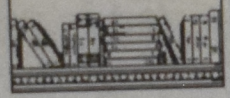

REDEEMER University College

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Redeemer University College invites applications for a tenure-track position in Education, to begin July 2006. The Education Department seeks candidates with teaching experience in elementary schools and specialization in an area of elementary school curriculum such as mathematics, science, or another speciality other than language arts or special education.

As a liberal arts and sciences university college rooted in the Reformed tradition of Christianity, we seek candidates who are committed to teaching and pursuing scholarship from this perspective. Applicants should possess, or be near completion of, a doctorate in Education. Interested applicants should submit a *curriculum vitae*, three letters of reference, and a one-page or two-page statement describing their own faith commitment and how it shapes their academic work. The deadline for applications is **February 17, 2006** or until the position is filled.

Direct general inquiries and applications to:
Dr. Jacob P. Ellens, Vice-President (Academic)
Redeemer University College
777 Garner Road East
Ancaster, ON L9K 1J4 Canada
jellens@redeemer.on.ca
www.redeemer.on.ca

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DORDT COLLEGE

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Qualifications include a graduate degree in librarianship from an American Library Association-accredited institution. Demonstrated teaching/training experience as well as experience in reference service and an academic library is desired. Candidates should possess a strong knowledge of computer and database applications of current and emerging technology including Windows, word processing, email and the World Wide Web as it relates to library services. Individuals who can work independently and as a part of a team, and possess the ability to communicate clearly, knowledgeably, and personably, both orally and in writing are encouraged to apply.

Candidates with a commitment to the Reformed faith and a desire to work with students and staff at a Christian college should send a letter of application and resume to Susan Droog, Director of Human Resources at the address below:

Dordt College
498 Fourth Ave NE
Sioux Center, IA 51250
Phone: (712) 722-6011
Fax: (712) 722-1198
E-mail: sdroog@dordt.edu

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Dordt College
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August 2006

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Youth Ministry and Biblical Studies Faculty
Teach general education courses in biblical theology, a section of the first-term seminar, and courses related to the youth ministry emphasis

To learn more about a position and receive application materials, qualified persons committed to a Reformed, biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest and curriculum vita/resume to:

Dr. Rockne McCarthy
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dordt College
498 4th Ave. NE
Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697

Facsimile: 712 722-4496
E-mail: vpaa@dordt.edu
Web site: www.dordt.edu/offices/academic_affairs

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Less preaching of hellfire in Scotland

Donald MacLeod

Fire and brimstone sermons are less likely to thunder from Scottish pulpits these days, but a third of the clergy still believe in the existence of hell, according to a survey published in December. A clear majority of ministers and priests of different denominations believe in judgment day and one in five say the damned will suffer eternal physical torment.

Eric Stoddart, a lecturer in practical theology at St Andrews University, surveyed 750 randomly selected clergy and found that 37 per cent believed in hell, although this was more marked in the Highlands and Western Isles, where conservative, Presbyterian congregations predominate.

"The doctrine of hell is downplayed by most of today's churches even by those who still believe in it. It isn't viewed as very politically correct even by a new generation of more theologically conservative ministers," said Dr Stoddart, who commented that there was a conspiracy of silence on the subject. The anonymous survey of clergy from Baptist, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, Methodist and Scottish Episcopalian churches, as well as the Church of Scotland, other Presbyterians and the Salvation Army, posed questions directly related to the fate of "the lost".

A majority believed that there would be a judgment day at which we will be separated into "the saved" and "the lost", who will be eternally separated from God. One third of the clergy surveyed believe that this separation will involve 'eternal mental anguish in hell', while a fifth believe that such a fate includes eternal physical torment.

Dr Stoddart explained: "The fire and brimstone of the past may largely have been extinguished, but the beliefs that many Scottish clergy hold concerning the potential horrors that await 'the lost' continue to be dark and foreboding.

"All will not be well, if that majority of Scotland's clergy are to be believed."

Dr Stoddart is interested in how belief in hell affects everyday life and is keen to hear from ordinary Christians as well. He said: "I'm interested in how people handle their belief in hell. If you believe (or are told you should believe) your grandmother is going to hell because she is not a Christian, how do you deal with that? Do you dehumanise her or psychologically distance yourself in order to accept her fate? How is it possible to go about daily life while believing that a loved one has entered eternal suffering? When most hell-believing Christians are likely to encounter the death of 'non-Christian' loved ones it is striking that it is a subject rarely tackled. No one talks about this aspect. There is something of a conspiracy of silence."

The study also found that clergy did not necessarily follow their particular 'official' doctrine, with members of the same church in opposite sides of the country holding opposing beliefs.

Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jan.15 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. W. Kroon will be preaching.

Jan 29 Organist Jonathan Oldengarm performs works by Bach, Karg-Elert and Grison, 3:00 p.m. at The Anglican Church of St. Clement, 59 Briar Hill Avenue, **Toronto**. Tickets ($20 & $15) are available at the door or through the church office at 416-483-6664. Visit: www.stclements-church.org/music.html for more information.

May 6, 7 Grace CRC, **Coburg**, 50th anniversary. All invited to join in celebrations. Biletting available. Call 905-372-3642 or email: grace.church@bellnet.ca. Website: www.cobourggrace.org

May 6 Combined 85 voices by the "Crescendo" Male Choir, St. Thomas and The Ottawa Carleton Male Choir present a "Concert of Sacred Song and Music". Special guest soloist Renee Stalenhoef, soprano. Saturday evening at 7:30 p.m. St. Paul's Congregational Church, 450 Park Ave. Chatham Tickets $10.00. Advance, Chatham: 351-7151. St. Thomas: 637-4357. Also available at the door.

May 7 Combined 85 voices by the "Crescendo" Male Choir, St. Thomas and The Ottawa Carleton Male Choir present a "Concert of Sacred Song and Music". Special guest soloist Renee Stalenhoef, soprano. Sunday evening at 7:30 p.m. Knox Presbyterian Church, 55 Hincks Street, St. Thomas. Freewill offering for the Canadian Bible Society. For information: (519) 637-4357.

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The Family Support Committee reviews the applications in March to be ready by June of each year.

How the committee decides who is eligible:
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b) The child or children must be enrolled in an OACS school for one year prior to the application.
c) Household income must be below $60,000.
d) Proof of income is required but no review of assets.
e) Decisions made by the Committee may be appealed to a special arbitrator.
f) Tuition assistance cheques are issued in October of each year.

Please direct inquiries to:
CEAF Development Director Bruce Dykstra
Call (home): **905-648-1681** or (cell) **905-515-9441**
Or write to: Christian Economic Assistance Foundation
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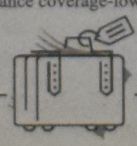

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Review

Both conservative and liberal Christians lay claim to C.S. Lewis

G. Jeffrey MacDonald

The legacy of one of the 20th century's most influential religious figures is up for debate, thanks to the family film expected to make millions at the box office.

Walt Disney's *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* has helped fuel fresh interest in the beliefs of its late creator, C.S. Lewis. Perhaps best known by many for his entertaining children's books, Lewis has attained a following among millions of Christians drawn to explore – and debate – what he believed to lie at the heart of Christianity.

In one camp are evangelicals, whose churches regularly use Lewis's book *Mere Christianity* to introduce newcomers to orthodox understandings of Jesus Christ. The evangelical magazine *Christianity Today* goes so far as to call this work "the best religious book of the 20th century."

"He still gives one of the best rational defenses of the Christian faith," says David L. Neuhouser, director of the Center for the Study of C.S. Lewis and Friends at Taylor University, an evangelical school in Upland, Ind. "His view of biblical truth in particular might not be where fundamentalists would like him to be, but in the important things [such as doctrinal claims], I think he is one with evangelicals.... Evangelicals do claim him, certainly."

Others, however, insist that Lewis cared chiefly about bringing the worldwide Christian family together. Since he helped advance a vibrant ecumenical movement in his day, he must not be reduced to a sectarian champion posthumously, according to the Rev. Dr. Clair McPherson, associate priest at the Church of the Transfiguration, an Episcopal congregation in lower Manhattan.

Lewis "makes it very clear ... that his purpose is not to be biased toward any denominational point of view or even any theological point of view within Christianity," says Reverend McPherson, who's been leading about 50 adults this fall in a four-week study of Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. "I would never say to evangelicals, 'you can't have him.' I would say, 'he belongs to all of us.' "

Laying claim to Lewis's legacy is serious business in the diverse world of 21st century Christianity. That's because 42 years after his death, this Irish-born Oxford University instructor still sells books like hotcakes: *Mere Christianity* alone has sold almost 1 million copies since January 2001.

Through a corpus that includes more than 30 books, Lewis explains and popularizes a faith that now nurses painful fractures along political as well as theological lines. Whichever of the competing strains can lay claim to his legacy stands to enjoy the fruits of association with a widely loved giant of Christian faith.

In this milieu, ecumenical Christians are refusing to let Lewis become an archetype of modern-day evangelicalism.

Adherents to "a sectarian style in confrontational evangelical circles could learn a lot from Lewis," says Stephen G. Post, a bioethicist at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. "I think what I do is more in tune with his tonality and content" when turning to science, Islam, and elsewhere for guidance on unforeseen moral dilemmas.

Such an eclectic method would please Lewis, he says, because it reflects the author's commitment to reason and "humility rather than hubris."

As a writer, Lewis defies easy categorization, as his books span genres ranging from his academic discipline of medieval literature to Christian apologetics, science fiction, and fantasy. As a Christian, he called Anglicanism his denominational home, yet he continues to inspire devotion to other branches of Christianity.

David Tiede Hottinger of Greenville, S.C., for instance, renounced the conservative evangelicalism of his youth and became in his words a "liberal Protestant with a social-worker view of Jesus" before encountering Lewis's writings as a graduate student at Harvard Divinity School. Rather than lead him back to evangelicalism, however, Lewis inspired him to leave Protestantism altogether.

"I became a Catholic in no small part due to the writings of C.S. Lewis," Mr. Hottinger says. Hearing Lewis reflect reverently on the church's sacraments, Hottinger says, made him rethink and recommit: "I guess it was a reconversion I had by reading Lewis in those years."

Lewis resonates with Roman Catholics and evangelicals alike, Hottinger says, through his refusal to water down Christian doctrine and yet write in a "style quite inviting." Lewis insists, for instance, in *Mere Christianity* that Jesus must have either been the Son of God he claimed to be, or a madman. Though he keeps readers laughing page after page, he also leaves no room for fence-sitters.

Others, however, emphasize that Lewis never framed humanity in terms of who was inside or outside the fold.

Bioethicist Post contends, for instance, that Lewis's determination always to "embrace rather than alienate the other" in such books as *The Abolition of Man* means "he wouldn't have given the time of day" to such contemporary hot sellers as the *Left Behind* series, where fictional accounts imagine nonbelievers suffering on earth during the biblically forecast rapture.

Without doubt, Lewis appeals to readers well beyond evangelical circles. The seven-book Narnia series has sold 95 million copies since its original release a half century ago. Sales of his nonfiction books have climbed 125 percent since January 2001, according to Harper San Francisco, which publishes six Lewis titles in its "Signature Classics" series. Only 25 percent of those sales came via the Christian Booksellers Association; the other 75 percent sold through such general market outlets as Costco and Barnes & Noble Booksellers.

Evangelicals appreciate where Lewis comes down on matters of orthodoxy, says Marc Tauber, deputy publisher at Harper San Francisco. But, he suggests, the all-too-human way Lewis gets there – by welcoming human passions and foibles while trusting in unconditional divine love – is sure to keep kindling feelings of kinship between Lewis and those outside evangelicalism.

"Lewis somehow supersedes those differences" demarcating liberal and conservative Christians, Mr. Tauber says. "I think that's what people love about Lewis: He's not afraid of the doubts.... But at the end of the day, it comes back to faith."